Attitudes of the British political elite towards the Soviet Union, May 1937- August 1939

Shaw, Louise Grace

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Name of Candidate: Louise Grace Shaw.

Name of College: Kings College, University of London.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the attitudes of the British political elite towards the Soviet Union and an assessment of the influence such attitudes had upon British foreign policy between May 1937 - August 1939. The British political elite in this thesis include members of the Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee, and Chiefs of Staff, Foreign Office officials, ambassadors and diplomats, and those members of the Conservative party and opposition elsewhere referred to as the 'anti-appeasers.' Using a large number of private papers, diaries and memoirs, as well as official government and Foreign Office records, the thesis provides a uniquely detailed and critical analysis of individuals. The views of the Soviet Union and of Anglo-Soviet collaboration amongst Foreign Office officials and the anti-appeasers especially have not before been examined in such depth. Nor have the views of the different groups within the British political elite been comparatively examined in one work.

In terms of the existing literary debate concerning this area of history, the thesis belongs to the counter-revisionist school of thought. Thus, it does not accept that politicians were constrained by factors outside of their control and instead suggests that there existed an alternative to the policy of appeasement pursued by Neville Chamberlain, namely an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. Not only does this thesis contend that there should have been an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance, but, more importantly, it contributes to existing literature by revealing how an alliance could have been, and so nearly was, concluded. Attitudes towards the Soviet Union were not simplistic and the thesis emphasises the complexities of attitudes that existed. Ultimately, however, it reveals that Britain's loss of a Soviet ally was due to the unwillingness of certain ministers to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices during the foreign policy decision making process.

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Introduction

'If,..., Mr Chamberlain on receipt of the Russian offer [of a triple alliance] had replied: "Yes. Let us three bond together and break Hitler's neck", or words to that effect, Parliament would have approved, Stalin would have understood, and history might have taken a different course.'[1]

Throughout the spring and summer of 1939, British, French and Soviet representatives negotiated to conclude some form of agreement regarding the resistance to future German aggression. The result, however, was the announcement of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact on 23 August. When Britain finally declared war on 3 September, it did so without a Soviet ally. The British government had failed to secure the assistance of a country that would eventually help to decide the outcome of the war. Moreover it had failed because of the unwillingness of certain ministers to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices during the foreign policy decision making process. This contention is substantiated in the following thesis by an examination of the attitudes of the British political elite towards the Soviet Union during the period of Neville Chamberlain's premiership, and an assessment of the influence such attitudes had upon British foreign policy.

Much has been written about appeasement policy, the Chamberlain government and the path to war.[2] Three schools of thought have emerged from the literature published to date. First, the 'orthodox' school of thought, which dominated opinion immediately after the Second World War. Authors of this school

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[1] Winston S. Churchill, *Second World War*, Vol. I., (London, 1948), p. 285.

[2] For two concise historiographies of the literature upon this subject see, Michael Jabara Carley, *1939 - The Alliance that never was and the coming of World War II*, (Chicago, 1999), pp. xiii - xix; D. Cameron Watt, 'Appeasement: The Rise of the Revisionist School', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVI, (1965), pp. 193-7, pp. 208-12.

criticise appeasement policy and the 'guilty men' of the British government for their obstinate support of appeasement.[3] Neville Chamberlain, in particular, is portrayed as a man determined to appease Hitler and Mussolini. The reasons given for his dedication to appeasement include an ignorance of foreign affairs, pacifism and self confidence. Several historians argue that appeasement policy reflected the pro-Fascist, anti-Communist ideology of the decision makers.[4] Not all authors agree that two such distinct groups, namely pro-Hitler, anti-Soviet appeasers on the one hand, and anti-Hitler, pro-Soviet anti appeasers on the other, existed.[5] It is argued by most, however, that war could have been avoided if Hitler had been stopped.

The second school of thought, the 'revisionist' school of thought, has emerged since the 1960s. Authors of this school emphasise what could be termed as the 'structural constraints' that faced Chamberlain and his government at the time, and thereby largely defend the policies pursued by London.[6] Such constraints include the disparity between Britain's will power and its military and economic strength, the pro-appeasement demands of the dominion governments, the strategical concerns raised by Polish and Rumanian opposition to Soviet access through their territory, as well as the simultaneous threat of three aggressor states, namely, Germany, Italy and Japan. Furthermore, revisionist literature challenges the image of Neville Chamberlain as being pro-German and ignorant of foreign affairs. Instead Chamberlain is depicted as a man not afraid of

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[3] For example, 'Cato', *Guilty Men,* (London, 1940); Lewis B. Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude, 1938-1939,* (London, 1948).

[4] Examples include: Keith Middlemas, *Diplomacy of Illusion: The British Government and Germany, 1937-1939,* (London, 1972); A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War,* (London 1961); Neville Thompson, *The Anti-Appeasers: Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s,* (Oxford, 1971).

[5] Robert Manne, 'The Foreign Office and the Failure of Anglo-Soviet Rapprochement', *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 16, (1981), pp. 725-755.

[6] See, for example, the recent works of John Charmley: John Charmley, *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace,* (London, 1989); Ibid, *Churchill: The End of Glory,* (Toronto, 1993).

conflict, but determined to avoid war.[7]

More recently, the third school of thought, the 'counter revisionists', have emerged. R.A.C Parker and Michael Jabara Carley are the main proponents of this school.[8] These authors return to earlier interpretations of the path to war. They criticise appeasement policy and the appeasers. They reject the contention that policy makers were constrained by factors outside of their control. Indeed, they point out the alternatives that existed, most importantly, the option of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance, and argue, as contemporaries did, that such alternatives should have been explored. It is within this school of thought that this thesis belongs. To some extent, it, too, returns to the arguments of contemporaries. The underlying contention of the thesis is that an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance could, and should, have been concluded. What does the thesis add to the existing counter revisionist literature? This shall be discussed below. First, it is important to discuss exactly who this thesis focuses upon.

Who are the British political elite? In this thesis they include members of the Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and Chiefs of Staff, Foreign Office officials, ambassadors and diplomats, and those members of the opposition and Conservative party collectively known as the 'anti-appeasers.' Members of the Cabinet and the Foreign Policy Committee are clearly recorded in official papers. Where relevant, individuals outside the Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and Chiefs of Staff, will be included in the chapters focusing upon these bodies because of their influence upon the decision makers. Sir Nevile

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[7] Several texts which highlight the influence of structural constraints upon British foreign policy are footnoted in D. Cameron Watt, 'Appeasement', pp. 208-212. More recent examples include; G. C. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury , 1932-1939,* (Edinburgh, 1979); B. Bond, *Military Policy Between the Two World Wars,* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 279-80; Michael Graham Fry, 'Agents and Structures: the Dominions and the Czechoslovak Crisis, September 1938', *Diplomacy and Statecraft,* Vol. X,(1999).

[8] Carley, *The Alliance* ; R. A. C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War,* (London, 1993).

Henderson, the British ambassador in Berlin, is one example. Chapters three and seven look at the attitudes of the British ambassador, military attachés and officials in the Moscow embassy, as well as the views of the heads of department and junior Foreign Office officials within Whitehall. The Northern Department is afforded greatest attention because of its focus upon the Soviet Union. The opinions of several diplomats in Europe, such as Sir Eric Phipps, the British ambassador in Paris, are also included. The 'anti-appeasers' are a more difficult group to define. Most of those named in chapters four and eight have been collectively referred to elsewhere in literature as the 'anti-appeasers.'[9] Throughout the 1930s, their names were associated with various political factions and groups. Namely, the 'Old Guard', which included Churchill and four or five of his loyal supporters, such as Robert Boothby, and another group known as the 'Glamour Boys', headed by Anthony Eden. This group totalled approximately thirty members by the time of Munich, including Harold Macmillan, Leopold Amery, Harold Nicolson, and General Spears.[10] The membership of each group was fluid and, in some cases, individuals appear to have been considered a member of both.[11] Indeed, though two distinct groups existed, members from each maintained regular contact and on several occasions collaborated with regard to protesting against government foreign policy, especially concerning the Soviet Union. Thus, in mailing addresses for memoranda and in recollections of meetings, the same names from both groups, and all political parties, repeatedly appeared together. In this sense, they were a cohesive body of politicians.

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[9] Thompson, *Anti Appeasers*, pp. 167-168.

[10] Max Egremont, *Under Two Flags. The Life of Major General Sir Edward Spears*, (London, 1997), pp. 127-8; pp. 134-5, p. 139; Harold Macmillan, *Winds of Change 1914 - 1939*, (London 1966), pp. 548-9.

[11] Egremont notes that Spears' papers show Boothby to be a member of 'Group', see, Egremont, *Spears*, pp. 127-8; pp. 134-5. But in Macmillan's memoirs, Boothby is listed as one of Churchill's followers, See, Macmillan, *Winds of Change* ,pp. 548-9.

Not all individuals from each sector of the British political elite are included in this thesis. Nor is the depth of analysis of each individual's attitudes equal. Several factors determined those focused upon and the amount of attention they received. For members of the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee especially, but also other sectors of the British political elite, the influence and prominence of individuals in political life affected the extent to which their views were initially researched. More importantly, however, only those that held and expressed an opinion about the Soviet Union are included. Amongst the anti-appeasers, only those that expressed support for Anglo-Soviet collaboration at some point during Chamberlain's premiership are looked at. Such politicians were deliberately chosen because it enables an examination of the reasons behind the support that existed for closer Anglo-Soviet relations amongst the British political elite. The findings can then be compared to, and used to explain, the attitudes of those who did not support collaboration with Moscow. The degree to which politicians and officials expressed their opinions determines the depth of analysis possible. Winston Churchill, Neville Chamberlain and Hugh Dalton, for example, repeatedly outlined their beliefs, and sometimes in great detail, in private papers, the House of Commons, official meetings and memoirs. In contrast, several individuals whom the reader might expect to be included or looked at in more detail in a thesis on this period are only briefly mentioned, or not mentioned at all, because of the paucity of material upon their attitudes. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, the Secretary of State for Dominions, Malcolm MacDonald and the leader of the Labour party, Clement Attlee are some examples. Explanations for their relative silence can be given. Clement Attlee, for example, suffered from flu in 1939 and this affected his attendance in parliament.[12] In the cases of Simon and MacDonald, the lack of information regarding their opinion reflects the

[12] Hugh Dalton explains Attlee's absence from parliament in terms of his illness in his diary. See Diary 1939 1/20. Dalton Papers. London School of Economics Archives.

weeding of their private papers.

For several individuals involved in the foreign policy decision making process, or in close liaison with the decision makers, weeding of their papers has also occurred. One such example is Richard Austin Butler, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Whether such weeding has had any significant effect upon the portrayal of individuals in this thesis is difficult to say, but as the collections of Churchill, Chamberlain and Dalton show, it was in private letters and diaries that individuals revealed their most personal, and more honest, feelings about subjects such as the Soviet Union and Anglo-Soviet collaboration. Another obstacle regarding the sources relevant for this subject is gaining access to private papers. At the time of researching this thesis, for example, the private papers of Leopold Amery were closed to all researchers. However, detailed memoirs as well as comments upon his views by other members of the British political elite has enabled a sufficient analysis. Indeed, despite the problems that exist concerning certain sources, there does exist a wealth of information upon which one can gain an accurate insight into the attitudes of the British political elite and the influence of such attitudes upon foreign policy decisions.

Using such information, this thesis establishes that alleged structural constraints and concerns about Soviet military weakness did not force the British government to adopt the policy it did towards the Soviet Union. Furthermore, though this thesis is not an examination of Anglo-French-Soviet relations, its brief examination of the attitudes and decisions of the French and Soviet governments shows that their responsibility for the failure to conclude an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance was not as great as that of the British government. To explain the failure to conclude an alliance, one has to look at the foreign policy decision making process in London and the attitudes of the British

political elite. This thesis differs from other works in the 'counter revisionist' school of thought, however, in several ways. Thus, it provides a uniquely detailed, critical analysis of the opinions and decisions of a wide variety of *individuals*. Views of the Soviet Union and of Anglo-Soviet collaboration amongst the anti-appeasers and members of the Foreign Office, especially, have not before been examined in such depth. Nor have the views of the different groups within the British political elite been comparatively examined in one work.

Moreover, this thesis makes a distinction between opinions of the Soviet Union and of Anglo-Soviet collaboration. It compares the two beliefs and assesses the relationship between them. It then discusses the influence of such beliefs upon foreign policy during this period. What it reveals is a complexity of attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration, despite the almost identical opinions of the Soviet Union held by the various groups and political parties.

This thesis does not return entirely to the views of the 'orthodox' school of thought, as other 'counter revisionist' historians allegedly have.[13] It reveals the differences of opinion amongst those that supported Anglo-Soviet collaboration in the Foreign Office and amongst the 'anti-appeasers'. Underlining the hesitancy amongst them and the psychological struggle several endured to voice their support for closer Anglo-Soviet relations. It acknowledges the support that existed for Chamberlain's policy towards the Soviet Union, and the reasons for it. Moreover, the thesis does not criticise the British government and its ministers equally. Nearly all members of the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee are criticised. Despite the hesitancy and contradictory remarks of several anti-appeasers, those looked at in this thesis argued that British ministers could, and should, put aside anti-Soviet prejudices. Indeed, they were

[13] Carley, *The Alliance* p. xvii.

willing and able to put aside their own prejudices against the Soviet Union. Cabinet ministers and members of the Foreign Policy Committee, in contrast, refused for too long to overlook their distrust and hostility completely.

This unwillingness, by most, to overlook completely their anti-Soviet prejudices throughout Chamberlain's premiership meant that all ministers ultimately bore some responsibility for Britain's failure to secure a Soviet ally. However, this thesis does not label them 'villains' or 'cowards'. Nor does it refer to 'moral depravity.'[14] Rather it reveals the real effort made by several ministers and officials to overlook what one could argue was an almost inherent ideological distrust and hostility towards the Soviet government. Despite the criticism of ministers by many within the 'orthodox' and 'counter revisionist' school of thought, the majority of ministers in fact *twice* succeeded in putting aside their suspicion. On both occasions, Neville Chamberlain undermined the opportunity to conclude an agreement with the Soviets. Indeed, this thesis emphasises the dishonest and destructive role of Chamberlain, especially, in Britain's failure to conclude an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance.

This thesis argues, as contemporaries did, that an alternative existed to the policy of appeasement, namely, an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance, and that the key to securing such an alliance was for British ministers to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices when deciding foreign policy. What it also shows, however, is the struggle and success of most ministers in putting aside their ideological suspicion and how close they came to concluding an alliance. Indeed, it reveals, that had it not been for Neville Chamberlain, an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance would have been concluded in May 1939.

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[14] Ibid., p. xiii.

Chapter One:

Attitudes of the British Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and Chiefs of Staff towards the Soviet Union, May 1937 - August 1938.

On 28 May, 1937, Neville Chamberlain replaced Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister of Great Britain. Anglo-Soviet relations were not foremost on his foreign policy agenda. Indeed, throughout 1937, the only diplomatic contact maintained with the Soviet government concerned its role in the Spanish civil war. Furthermore, during the first eight months of 1938, the British government deliberately excluded the Soviet Union from talks held and decisions taken regarding the crisis in the Czechoslovakian Sudetenland. The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed examination of the attitudes held towards the Soviet Union by members of the Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and Chiefs of Staff. Also to discuss the various influences upon British foreign policy during this period and show that they did not necessarily dictate policy towards the Soviet Union.

The new Prime Minister's first Cabinet consisted of Sir John Simon as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leslie Hore-Belisha as Secretary of State for War, Duff Cooper as First Lord of the Admiralty, and Samuel Hoare as Secretary of State for Home Affairs. Anthony Eden remained Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and was assisted by the Lord President of the Council, Lord Halifax. The foreign policy of the new government was two fold; 'limited liability' regarding Europe and the Far East, and determined appeasement of Germany and Italy.[15] Thus, in his 1937 report, the Minister for Coordination of Defence, Sir Thomas

[15] David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled - British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, (London and New York, 1991), p. 119; Bond, *Military Policy* , pp. 270-71; Brian Bond, 'The Continental Commitment in British Strategy in the 1930s', in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Lothar Kettenacker eds., *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*, (London, 1983), p. 201.

Inskip, laid down Britain's new strategic priorities: First, to protect the British isles, Second, to protect the trading routes that led to Britain, third, to safeguard the British empire, and fourth, to assist allies, but only in the last resort.[16] Consequently, the British government took no significant action regarding Japan's renewed war against China and maintained a policy of non-intervention concerning the escalating Spanish civil war.

The Spanish civil war had begun in July 1936 following the failed attempt at a coup d'etat by the Nationalists, led by General Franco, against the elected Popular Front government. The British and French governments had declared a policy of non-intervention in August 1936, establishing the Non-Intervention Committee [NIC] a month later. Both political and strategical considerations determined the policy. The Chiefs of Staff, warned that Britain needed to ensure good relations with whichever side were eventually victorious in Spain. For those that perceived the Spanish Popular government to be a bastion of Communism, the policy appeared to protect the French government from Communist infiltration. Subscribing to non-interventionism was thought to create a veneer of neutrality that would at least quieten the left wing politicians in parliament, moreover it was hoped that not intervening would prevent any further alienation of Italy or Germany. It was this policy that Chamberlain inherited,[17] and it was primarily in the context of the Spanish Civil War and the policy of non-intervention that ministers discussed the Soviet Union during 1937.

By the time Chamberlain became Prime Minister in the summer of 1937, the

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[16] Adrian Preston, *General Staffs and Diplomacy before the Second World War*, (London, 1978), p. 122; Bond, *Military Policy*, pp. 257-258; G. Peden, *British Rearmament* , pp. 138-139.

[17] Jill Edwards, *The British Government and the Spanish Civil War, 1936 -1939*, (London, 1979), pp. 35-36; pp. 60-61; p. 153.

policy of non-intervention was, in any practical sense, a failure.[18] The British government had never had any authority to enforce non-intervention. The Germans and Italians intervened almost immediately after the outbreak of war and despite their declarations of allegiance to a policy of non-intervention, continued to send aid and men in support of Franco's Nationalists throughout. The Soviets, in response, also broke their declarations of non-intervention in October and sent aid and men in support of the Republicans.[19] Throughout the Spanish Civil War, the Soviet government, along with the German and Italian governments, was invited to participate in the Non Intervention Committee. Disagreements frequently occurred, however. Moreover, the Soviets complained that the British showed unfair leniency towards the Italians and Germans. Viscount Chilston, the British ambassador in Moscow, explained the views of the Kremlin. The complaint, he wrote, 'is that we have been weak with Hitler, Mussolini and the Japs, and let them do what they like in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and China.'[20] Indeed, the Soviets did not think it impossible that the British government would conclude a four power pact with the Germans, Italians and French, at the exclusion of the Soviet Union.[21]

Moscow's accusations and suspicions were justified. Complaints by Soviet representatives about German and Italian intervention, especially at the beginning of the conflict, were ignored. In 1936, the Foreign Secretary could not promise that a settlement would not be made with the Italian and German governments. Furthermore, British naval policy, though not actively aiding Franco, undermined the position of the Republicans by failing to retaliate

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[18] Ibid, p. 60.

[19] Ibid, p. 136; For more details on the Spanish civil war and the contributions made by the Germans, Italians and Soviets see; Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, third ed., (London, 1966); G. Stone, 'The European Great Powers and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', in R. Boyce and E. Robertson eds., *Paths to War: New Essays on the Origins of the Second World War,* (New York, 1989), pp. 199-232.

[20] Telegram to Chilston. 27 Oct, 1937; Chilston to Eden. 29 Oct, 1937. FO 371/ 21347.

[21] Seventh meeting of NIC. FO 849/1. Cited in Edwards, *The British Government,* pp. 47-8

against Nationalist aggression. The Soviet government was not exempt from criticism. But the Germans and Italians had intervened first and War Office reports concluded, even by the autumn of 1937, that there remained no evidence to 'show that there are other governments more to blame than those of Germany and Italy.'[22] An attempt to take action against the illegal tactics of the Italians and Germans was made at the Nyon Conference, on 14 September 1937. Decisions were made regarding the measures to be taken to protect threatened shipping in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. The Nyon conference, however, was to be the last attempt at curbing the illegitimate actions of the Germans and Italians.[23] During the autumn of 1937, Eden worked hard to ensure the continued inclusion of the Soviet Union in a settlement of the Spanish crisis. He warned Moscow against playing into the hands of the Germans and Italians.[24] Such effort to ensure cooperation between the Soviets and the West ended, however, with Eden's resignation on 19 February, 1938 , as did any form of resistance against Germany and Italy by the British government.

Since becoming Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain had never desired to improve relations with the Soviet Union. His primary aim in 1937 and throughout the duration of the Spanish Civil war until its end in April 1939, was to settle issues with the Italian government and appease Berlin. He wanted volunteers withdrawn from Spain, a Franco victory, and an end to the war he perceived to be a major obstacle to improved Anglo-Italian and Anglo-German relations.[25] During the following sixteen months, the British government still

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[22] War Office note on the supply of arms to Spain, 23 Nov, 1936. FO 371/ 20586 . Cited Ibid, p. 135; pp. 47-48; pp. 130-1.
[23] Ibid, pp. 117 - 127.
[24] Eden to Chilston, 27 Oct, 1937. no. 271; Eden to Chilston, 18 Oct, 1937. no. 252. D.B.F.P., 2, XIX.
[25] A few political notes on foreign agreements re our duties. NC 2/25. Cited in Edwards, *The British Government,* p. 129.

had to deal with the issues of withdrawing "volunteers"[26] from Spain, and legal recognition of the rebels. But Nationalist control grew during this period. The problems of the Spanish Civil War were no longer of major concern to the Cabinet. Instead, by early 1938, foreign policy discussions became dominated by the growing crisis in the Sudetenland.

Internal weaknesses had existed within Czechoslovakia since its creation in 1919. The Czech population were deeply divided between those that supported the existing order, Slovaks demanding autonomy, and those who felt affiliation either with Hungary or Poland. In addition and most problematic were the three and a quarter million Germans living in the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia.[27] Throughout the summer of 1937, the complaints of the Sudeten Germans against alleged wrongs had increased.[28] But at the beginning of 1938, nationalist feeling amongst the Sudeten Germans was provoked even further by the absorption of Austria by Hitler in March.[29]

The Anschluss, earlier forbidden by the treaties of Versailles and St Germain, took place on 13 March, 1938 when German troops marched into Austria and Austrian independence disappeared. The event did not cause much reaction within Britain. By most it was perceived to be an inevitable occurrence. The British Prime Minister only weakly criticised the step.[30] In contrast, the Soviet government was alarmed by Hitler's actions. In particular, Moscow feared Hitler's next target would be Czechoslovakia. Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, told Viscount Chilston that 'he was sure that Herr Hitler having now annexed Austria was not going to stop there and would

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[26] "Volunteers" was a term used to describe those fro Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union who went to fight in the Spanish civil war.
[27] Christopher Thorne, *The Approach of War 1938-1939,* (London, 1967), pp. 54 - 55.
[28] Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power,* (Sutton, 1984), pp. 462-3.
[29] Newton to Halifax. 22 Mar, 1938. no. 97. D.B.F.P., 3, I.
[30] Thorne, *Approach of War,* pp. 35, p. 39, p. 49.

soon proceed to deal with Czechoslovakia.'[31] Any German ambitions regarding Czechoslovakia were directly relevant and of great importance to the Soviet government, who had previously signed a treaty of mutual assistance with the

Czechoslovakian government in 1935. Thus, Moscow took the initiative regarding future resistance to any such actions. On 17 March, Litvinov proposed a conference of all major powers to discuss the potential crisis in the Sudetenland.[32] The British government rejected the proposal.[33] The Cabinet had already explored the possibility of military collaboration with regards to the crisis. The Chiefs of Staff were instructed to advise on

> ...(a) the British government giving a contingent guarantee to France to protect her is she were attacked as a consequence of her going to support Czechoslovakia, and (b) a Grand Alliance, involving Britain, France, and Russia, based on the League of Nations and directed against any and all aggression.[34]

But no support for collaboration with the Soviets existed within the Cabinet.

At the same time as Litvinov had proposed a conference with the French and British regarding collaboration against future aggression, the Commissar also proposed conversations with the French and Czechoslovakian governments in order to discuss and conclude a plan regarding Soviet military assistance in the event of an attack upon Czechoslovakia.[35] A report informed the newly appointed Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, that 'a Russian General and Colonel have arrived in Prague and are having general discussions with the General Staff.'[36] Moscow reassured both the French and Czechoslovakian governments

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[31] Chilston to Halifax, 16 Mar, 1938. no. 83. D.B.F.P., 3, I.
[32] Maisky to Halifax. 17 Mar, 1939. RAB F84 Part 1. Papers of R. A. Butler. Trinity College Archives, Cambridge University.
[33] CAB 27 / 627 58 mtg. 21 Mar, 1938.
[34] John Harvey ed., *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1937-1940,* (London, 1970), p. 119. 17 Mar, 1939.
[35] William Strang, *Home and Abroad,* (London, 1956)p. 151.
[36] Newton to Halifax. 28 Apr, 1938. no. 163. D.B.F.P., 3, I.

that 'they would immediately honour their obligations'[37] , as agreed in the 1935 treaty. On 28 - 29 April, however, Chamberlain, the French Prime Minister, Edouard Daladier, the French Foreign Minister, Georges Bonnet, and Lord Halifax met in London. They decided that pressure would be placed on the Czechoslovakian President, Edouard Benes, to settle the Sudeten problem with the leader of the Sudeten Germans Konrad Heinlein. Not until a week later was the Soviet ambassador in Britain, Ivan Maisky, informed about the talks and its decisions.[38] Such action was indicative of the British desire not to include the Soviet Union in any settlement of the Sudeten problem.

During mid-May the threat of war appeared to increase considerably when Czech troops were mobilised following rumours that German troops were preparing to threaten Czechoslovakian borders on 20-21 May. Georges Bonnet announced French assistance if Czechoslovakia was attacked. Halifax warned the German Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, that if Germany was to attack Czechoslovakia there could be no assurances that Britain would stand aside.[39] Whether the French and British governments would have acted against Germany is impossible to tell because conflict was ultimately avoided.[40] Notably, the only contact with the Soviet government during the occurrence was a note to ask for the avoidance of any 'incident which might give the German Government an excuse for trying to settle the Czechoslovak question by force...'[41] London did pay more attention to the role of the Soviet Union in June. But discussions concentrated only on how to reduce the Soviet Union's potential

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[37] Ibid.

[38] FO Memorandum - Record of Anglo-French conversation during the visit of French ministers to London. 28, 29 Apr, 1938. RAB F84 Part 1. Butler Papers; Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *The Appeasers*, (Boston, 1963), p. 114.

[39] Phipps to Halifax. 22 May, 1938. no. 261; Halifax to Henderson. 22 May, 1938. no. 264. D.B.F.P., 3, I.

[40] D.C.Watt, 'The May Crisis of 1938: A rejoinder to Mr Wallace', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, (1963), p. 476; W. V. Wallace, 'A Reply to Mr Watt', Ibid., p. 486.

[41] Halifax to Vereker. 27 May, 1938. no. 331. D.B.F.P., 3, I,

involvement. Thus Cabinet ministers deliberated the possibility of altering the Soviet, Czech, and French treaties. The suggestion was to remove Czechoslovakia's obligation to assist France or the Soviet Union if either were attacked. The French and Soviets would remain obliged to defend Czechoslovakia, but a non-aggression pact between Czechoslovakia and Germany would be concluded stating that Czech territory could not be used as a passage for others.[42]

Would the French government not be aggrieved at the British decision to weaken their east European alliance? The French government had signed a treaty with the Czechoslovakian government in 1925 pledging to aid Czechoslovakia if it was attacked and France itself appeared to be in danger. At the beginning of 1938, the French Prime Minister, Léon Blum, and his Foreign Minister, Paul Bancour, had reassured the Czechoslovakian government that that they would fulfil their treaty obligations. Unfortunately for the Czech government, Blum's government fell on 10 April. The new Prime Minister, Edouard Daladier, distrusted Hitler. He stepped up rearmament and also urged the British government to warn the German dictator against aggressive action towards Czechoslovakia. Ultimately, however, he did not want to go to war, and was not willing to take a stand in defence of the Sudetenland. Hence, French foreign policy throughout 1938 came to reflect more the position of the new Foreign Minister, Georges Bonnet, a fervent supporter of appeasement at whatever cost.[43]

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[42] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 151. 8 June, 1939.

[43] Robert Young, *France and the Origins of the Second World War,* (London, 1996), pp. 30-31; Phipps to Halifax. 24 Mar, 1938. no. 112. D.B.F.P., 3, I; J. Paul Boncour, *Entre deux Guerres,* (1945-7), Vol. III, pp. 96 - 101; G. Bonnet, *Défense de la Paix,* (1946-8), Vol. I, p. 125, p. 138; General M. Gamelin, *Servir,* (1946-7), Vol. II, pp. 318-61. Cited in Thorne, *Approach of War,* pp. 58-59; Martin S. Alexander, *The Republic in Danger - General Maurice Gamelin and the Politics of French Defence 1933 - 1940,* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 279.

In particular, Bonnet, indeed, many in the French political elite including the French General Staff, opposed collaboration with the Soviets.[44] Relations between the two supposed allies were poor. The French press and politicians accused Moscow of interfering in French domestic affairs. The Soviet government attacked Paris for what it perceived to be its abandonment of French commitments in eastern Europe. Reports of Stalin's purges, now being received in great detail both in France and Britain, evoked horror. French generals did not want to ally with a country that could offer, as far as they were concerned, little effective military assistance. In addition, they were not prepared to agree to an alliance at the expense of ties with Poland. A further reason, in fact the primary reason for this opposition to collaboration, however, was ideological suspicion and hostility. Paris distrusted Soviet intentions. To some degree, the devastating effects of the purges, especially on Soviet military potential, provided a means by which both the military experts and the politicians could disguise the real cause of their opposition to French - Soviet collaboration.[45] In September, Eric Phipps, a good friend of Georges Bonnet, told Halifax of Bonnet's belief that:

> ...Russia's great wish is to provoke a general conflagration in which she herself will play but little part, beyond perhaps a little bombing from a distance, but after which she will arise like a phoenix, but out of all our ashes, and bring about world revolution.[46]

Not everyone in France opposed French - Soviet collaboration, especially concerning the Czechoslovakian problem.[47] Robert Coulondre, the French

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[44] Alexander, *Gamelin*, p. 279; pp. 299-300.

[45] Ibid; Telegram from Phipps to Foreign Office, 24 Jan, 1938. no. 108. PHPPS 1/19. Phipps papers, Churchill College archives, Cambridge University; Michael Jabara Carley, 'Down a Blind-Alley: Anglo-Franco-Soviet Relations, 1920 - 1939', *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol. XXIX, (1994), pp. 165-6.

[46] Telegram from Phipps to Halifax. 2 Sept, 1938. no. 559. PHPPS 1/20. Phipps Papers.

[47] M. Blum and M. Herriot, for example, were reported by Phipps to have favourable views of the Soviet Union. See, Telegram from Phipps to Halifax, 18 Nov, 1938. no. 753. PHPPS 1/21; Telegram from Phipps to Halifax, Paris, 26 Mar, 1938. no. 205. PHPPS 1/20. Phipps papers.

ambassador in Moscow between 1936-1938, for example, worked very hard to improve relations and reduce the mistrust that existed in France.[48] But his attempts made little difference. Paris did not denounce the Franco-Soviet pact that had been signed in 1935 because it represented some security. It was thought, for example, to prevent the danger of collaboration between the Germans and the Soviets.[49] Yet, throughout 1938, one finds numerous examples of French politicians and military personnel deliberately misreporting information in order to present a Franco-Soviet alliance as potentially ineffective. For example, although contact was made with Moscow in May to discover Soviet intentions regarding Czechoslovakia, nothing was concluded. Instead, Bonnet made it clear that he wanted London to press the Czechoslovakian president to make concessions.[50] In July, the Czech proposal for conversations regarding the coordination of French and Soviet military action in support of Czechoslovakia was avoided.[51] Once more Bonnet recommended informal dialogue with the Soviet government in August to clarify its intentions regarding the defence of Czechoslovakia. Yet, when Bonnet repeated the negotiations to Sir Eric Phipps, he deliberately suppressed the Soviet offer of staff talks.[52] Furthermore, French military experts continued to downplay Soviet military potential during this period[53] , and the more favourable reports, such as that stating possible Soviet air support over Rumania, were overlooked. Throughout 1938 and especially regarding the Czechoslovakian crisis, then, the French government said much, but actually did very little.[54]

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[48] Carley, *The Alliance* ,p. 3; pp. 27-28; pp. 57-62; p. 67; p. 77.
[49] Alexander, *Gamelin,* p. 296.
[50] Halifax to Newton. 16 May, 1938. no. 219. D.B.F.P., 3, I,. n.2. Cited in Anthony Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War,* (London, 1977), p. 183.
[51] SHAT, 5N579/D6, no. 559/DN/S, Gamelin to Daladier. 18 July, 1938. Cited in M. Thomas, 'France and the Czechoslovak Crisis', *Diplomacy and Statecraft,* Vol. X, (1999), p. 135.
[52] Adamthwaite, *France,* pp. 48-204.
[53] Alexander, *Gamelin,* p. 284.
[54] Thomas, 'France', p. 145.

There is the view that French inaction during this period resulted from British pressure, that French foreign policy represented a mere appendage of British appeasement policy.[55] Such an interpretation can be convincingly challenged. The evidence clearly reveals that French foreign policy reflected primarily the wishes and intentions of those in Paris. The French government made no real effort to defend its east European ally during 1938 and was willing to comply with Chamberlain's determination to conciliate the aggressors.[56] Yet this does not mean that the British government can be entirely excused of all responsibility for French inaction. London did actively try to influence French foreign policy, particularly with regard to the Soviet Union. London repeatedly warned the French government that an alliance with the Soviet Union would evoke an unfavourable response from certain sectors of the political elite.[57] The French did intend to avoid any military collaboration with the Soviet Union, nevertheless, one cannot ignore the steps taken by the British government to inform Paris that it did not approve of any western collaboration with the Soviets, including French-Soviet cooperation.[58] London was determined to ensure Soviet exclusion from both British and French foreign policy plans regarding the settlement of the Sudeten crisis, and therefore must bear some responsibility.

Throughout the summer of 1938, negotiations between the Czechoslovakian government and the Sudeten German party continued. Added to the demands of the Sudeten Germans however were now the claims made by the Polish and Hungarian governments. Both wanted the return of land and minorities. Halifax and Chamberlain decided to send a mediator to Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain announced Lord Runciman's (President of Board of Trade during

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[55] Ibid, p. 123.
[56] Adamthwaite, *France*, pp. 353-358.
[57] Ibid, p. 49; p. 182; p. 274.
[58] Thomas, 'France', p. 135.

Baldwin's premiership) visit to Czechoslovakia at the end of July.[59] Meanwhile the Soviet government maintained its criticism of what its perceived to be French and British weakness in the face of German aggression.[60] Moscow stated, once again, its own willingness to defend its east European ally.[61] But it received no response and no proposals of collaboration from either the French or British.

Between May 1937 - August 1938, then, Anglo-Soviet relations developed little. During 1937 it would be accurate to contend that there did not exist any specific foreign policy towards the Soviet Union. Chamberlain's mind, from the moment he became Prime Minister, was focused upon the appeasement of Germany and Italy. However, during *1938* and particularly regarding the Sudetenland crisis, the decisions and statements of ministers and officials revealed that there existed a very specific policy towards the Soviet Union, namely, the British government remained intent on deliberately excluding the Soviet government from the affairs of Western and Central Europe.[62] Individuals involved in the foreign policy decision making process during this period did, after the war, deny that this was the intention of the British government. R. A. Butler is one example.[63] Yet their recollections do not correlate with the events and decisions outlined in this chapter, or with the decisions taken in September, as outlined in chapter two. Throughout 1938, the Soviet government possessed a legitimate interest in the developments of the Sudetenland crisis because of its involvement in the French, Czech, Soviet alliance system. The British and French governments, for this reason alone, should have discussed proposals with Moscow, or at least informed the Soviet government of developments and

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[59] Col. 2963. 26 July, 1938. 338 HC Deb 5s.
[60] Halifax to Chilston. 17 Aug, 1938. no. 637. D.B.F.P., 3, II.
[61] Note by Ashton Gwatkin. 26 Aug, 1938. no. 698. Ibid.
[62] Henderson to Halifax. 4 Sept, 1938. no. 771. Ibid.
[63] Richard Austin Butler, *The Art of the Possible,* (London, 1971), p. 71.

decisions.[64] But they deliberately chose not to. Why did London not want the Soviet Union to participate in the settlement of the Sudetenland crisis?

Ministers and the Chiefs of Staff explained their decisions in relation to the policy of conciliation (towards Germany and Italy) and its causes.[65] Indeed, factors such as the desire for peace and the 'structural constraints' facing the government were put forward to explain British foreign policy decisions towards the Soviet Union until the summer of 1939.[66] Before one can discuss the role of suspicion and ideology in the foreign policy decision making process, therefore, it is necessary to assess the influence of these factors.

Of particular importance was the pursuit of peace and Chamberlain's determination to conciliate Hitler.[67] So much has been written on Chamberlain and appeasement, it would be repetitive to discuss in detail the Prime Minister's attitude towards the dictators here. The view taken by this thesis is that throughout 1938 - 1939, Chamberlain wanted to avoid war through diplomatic means. ' These dictators, as it seemed to him, must be reasonable men', and he was confident in his own ability to persuade them against aggression.[68] The Soviet government on the other hand called for Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration and later a treaty of mutual assistance in order to resist German aggression. Such proposals were considered by British ministers and officials to

[64] Although Britain was not a part of the Soviet-French-Czech alliance system, it had involved itself in deliberations about the future of the Sudetenland - a subject of direct interest to the Soviet government.

[65] 'Notes by the First Sea Lord on Sir Robert Vansittart's memorandum on the world situation and rearmament. January, 1937.' CHT 3/1/192-201. Lord Chatfield's papers. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich; Lord Chatfield, *It Might Happen Again,* 2nd Volume, (London, 1947), p. 168; p. 174.

[66] For examples of literature that emphasise the structural constraints upon the government of the period see, *Introduction.*

[67] Parker, *Appeasement;* John Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich-Prologue to Tragedy,* (London, 1948); Gilbert and Gott, *Appeasers.*

[68] Duff Cooper, 'Chamberlain a candid portrait', November 1939. RAB F 77. Butler Papers. Trinity College Archives, Cambridge; Middlemas, *Diplomacy* , pp. 2-3; pp. 179-80; p. 209; p. 307.

be deliberately provocative to the Germans[69] and therefore incompatible with the aims of the British government. An Anglo-French-Soviet agreement in any form would, many believed, lead to a formation of blocs, in particular, ideological blocs which would only result in dangerous instability. In 1938, the Foreign Policy Committee was told:

> His Majesty's Government are of the opinion that the indirect, but nonetheless inevitable consequence of such action as is proposed by the Russian Government would be to aggravate the tendency towards the establishment of division between nations, according to the different forms of their domestic government, which must in the view of His Majesty's Government be inimical to the prospects of European peace.[70]

An alliance would almost certainly lead to cries of encirclement by Germany, thus diminishing any willingness to negotiate on Berlin's part. Halifax explained that 'the more closely we associated ourselves with...Russia the more we produced on German minds the impression that we were plotting to encircle Germany and the more difficult it would be to make any real settlement with Germany.'[71] Sir Nevile Henderson, the British ambassador in Berlin, continued to inform London of the German government's hostility towards, and suspicion of, the Soviet Union in an effort to warn of the damage Soviet involvement would inevitably cause to Britain's appeasement policy. In May 1938, for example, he reported to Halifax;

> Baron Von Neurath told me he was convinced ... that the Czech war office was largely under influence of Moscow...Russia, anticipating failure in Spain, was in his opinion now endeavouring to create new focus of trouble in Czechoslovakia. .[72]

A choice, it was explained on several occasions, had to be made between Germany and the Soviet Union. The German government were simply not

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[69] Col. 304. 4 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s; Keith Robbins, *Munich 1938*, (London, 1968), p. 335.
[70] CAB 27 / 627 58 mtg . 21 Mar, 1938; Leopold Stennett Amery, *My Political Life Volume Three: The Unforgiving Years 1929-1940,* (London, 1953-1955), pp. 262-3.
[71] CAB 27 / 623 25 mtg.15 Mar, 1938.
[72] Henderson to Halifax. 27 May, 1938. no. 324. D.B.F.P., 3, I.

willing to consider Soviet involvement in the settling of the Sudeten crisis and if Hitler was to be appeased, the Soviet government had to be excluded.[73] 'We had to face facts' Halifax explained to Maisky after the Munich Conference, 'and one of these facts was,..., that the heads of the German Government and of the Italian Government would not be willing in present circumstances to sit in conference with Soviet representatives.'[74]

Throughout 1939, the same arguments referring to Britain's wish to conciliate Hitler and the undermining effect such an alliance would have, were reiterated.[75] The Foreign Office believed that the Axis would perceive a 'triple pact of mutual assistance', as signifying Britain's abandonment of 'any further attempt to remain impartial.' Britain would be thought by others to be 'deliberately aligning for war between rival groups of powers', and this would in turn infuriate Hitler and possibly lead to aggressive action.[76] Most recently, Gabriel Gorodetsky has highlighted the incompatibility of aims as the primary reason for the failure of the Anglo-French - Soviet summer negotiations, stating that what both 'Soviet and western historians have often failed to realise [is] *sic* that England and the Soviet Union were in fact seeking different agreements.'[77]

Apart from wanting to avoid war, Britain was also perceived by military experts to be incapable of going to war during this period. In 1938, the Soviet Union may have been able to resist German forces in the East, but Britain was thought to be incapable of defeating German forces in the West. The Chiefs of Staff had,

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[73] CAB 27 / 627 69 mtg. 1 Dec, 1938; Halifax to Chilston. 29 Sept, 1938. no. 1221. D.B.F.P., 3, II.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 272. 4 Apr, 1939.

[76] Foreign Office Memorandum on the Anglo-Soviet Negotiations. 22 May, 1939. no. 589. D.B.F.P., 3, V.

[77] Seeds to Halifax. 18 Apr, 1938. no. 201. D.B.F.P., 3, V; Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion - Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia,* (New Haven and London, 1999), p. 6.

for some time, supported a policy of limited liability.[78] During the year of the Czechoslovakian crisis, their advice remained constant; that Britain should try to avoid war at all costs.[79] During the winter after Munich the process of rearmament was accelerated[80], confidence grew amongst the military experts, and by the end of January 1939, the Chiefs of Staff were in favour of accepting military continental commitment.[81] There still existed, however, a number of conditions that militated against a continental commitment, including, for example, the financial and industrial arguments that Britain could not afford to rearm all three services.[82] Furthermore, the French military machine, Daladier was informed by his Generals, would similarly face great difficulties in a war against Germany.[83]

Inherent strategic difficulties also beset Anglo-French-Soviet military collaboration. The defence of Czechoslovakia from German aggression, especially, raised problems because the country was on the other side of Europe surrounded by hostile nations.[84] Chamberlain pointed out that 'you only have to look at a map to see that nothing that France or Russia could do could save Czechoslovakia from being overrun by the Germans...Russia is 100 miles away.'[85] Thus, the Prime Minister wrote of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance; '...there is almost everything to be said for it until you come to examine its practicability.'[86] The greatest dilemma involved in any proposal of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance in 1938, and indeed in 1939, was the refusal of both

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[78] Bond, *Military Policy*, pp. 270-271.
[79] Preston, *General Staffs*, p. 124.
[80] Ibid, p. 125.
[81] Wesley Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy*, (London,, 1985), pp. 232 - 4.
[82] Bond, *Military Policy*, pp. 203-205.
[83] Alexander, *Gamelin*, p. 279.
[84] This not only included Germany, but also Hungary and Poland. For further information upon Poland's role in the Munich crisis, see; Anna M. Cienciala, 'The Munich Crisis of 1938', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. X, (1999).
[85] David Dilks, ed., *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938 - 1945*, (London, 1971), p. 65.
[86] Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, (London, 1946) p. 347.

Poland and Rumania to allow access for Soviet troops across their territories.[87] Relations between the Polish and Soviet governments in particular were not cordial. This was reflected in Polish defence planning which was focused more upon defending Poland from the Soviet Union than from the Germans.[88]

Indeed, the one certainty in Polish policy was an adamant refusal to allow Soviet forces to cross Polish territory.[89] In 1938 this made Soviet assistance to Czechoslovakia almost impossible because the Soviet Union did not have borders with either Germany or Czechoslovakia. The Soviets would be unable to bring direct military pressure upon Germany or supply Czechoslovakia with materials and arms without the cooperation of the surrounding countries. The Rumanians were not so adamant in their refusal, but there was a possibility that the Rumanian government would, at the last moment, also refuse access for Soviet troops and transport.[90] As long as the hostility held by both governments towards the Soviet Union continued, so the strategical problems remained. During 1939, the issue was again raised by Chamberlain and Halifax and said to be crucially influential upon the foreign policy decisions taken.[91]

The opinions of the Poles and Rumanians were, therefore, important considerations for the British. So too were the attitudes of the Dominions. The dominion governments would, potentially, be involved in a war over the Sudetenland, and any war on the side of Poland during the following year. However, the Dominions did not support an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance before 24 May 1939.[92] In addition to the ideological prejudices that existed

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[87] CAB 27 / 627 56 mtg. 21 Mar, 1938; Chilston to Halifax. 22 Apr, 1938. Enclosure Firebrace to Chilston. 18 Apr, 1938. no. 151. D.B.F.P., 3, I.
[88] Alexander, *Gamelin*, p. 290.
[89] Letter from Kennard to Halifax. 5 Oct, 1938. FO 371 / 21808 .
[90] Phipps to Halifax. 7 Sept, 1938. no. 791. D.B.F.P., 3, II. Regarding Rumanian airspace, see p. 27.
[91] *Chapters 5 and 6.*
[92] Fry, 'Agents and Structures', p. 298.

amongst the majority of the dominion governments, it was suspected that Soviet commitments to Czechoslovakia and France were forged only to ensure a capitalist war between the West and Germany.[93] Their opposition to an alliance continued during the early months of 1939.[94] As late as 16 May, the Prime Minister warned the Cabinet 'that anything in the nature of an alliance with Russia would give rise to serious difficulties with certain of the Dominions.'[95]

Such issues as have been discussed were evidently important considerations for ministers and the Chiefs of Staff throughout 1938 and 1939. Whilst they confirmed and may have even influenced the policy of appeasement, however, they were not in fact the reasons for London's refusal to collaborate with Moscow during this period. Instead, it is the contention of this thesis that British policy towards the Soviet Union was determined by the unwillingness of certain ministers to put aside the ideological suspicion and political hostility each held towards the Soviet Union during the foreign policy decision making process.[96]

This contention can be substantiated, firstly, by challenging the reasons for Soviet exclusion put forward by ministers at the time. Thus, just as several historians have argued that Britain's military weakness and the opposition to war from the dominion powers confirmed rather than dictated Chamberlain's determination to conciliate Germany[97] , it is the contention of this thesis that

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[93] Ibid, p. 300; p. 303.
[94] Richard Ovendale, *"Appeasement" and the English Speaking World,* (Cardiff, 1975), pp. 265 - 98.
[95] CAB 27 / 625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939; Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War,* (London, 1989), p. 180.
[96] Carley, *The Alliance,* p. XVIII.
[97] It is significant that both Maurice Cowling and A. Peden acknowledge that even if Britain had been militarily strong enough to defeat the Germans, Chamberlain would not necessarily have chosen to go to war. See Preston, *General Staffs,* p. 124; Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy 1933 - 1940,* (London, 1975), p. 394; Regarding the dominion powers see, R. Ovendale, 'Britain and the Dominions and the Coming of the Second World War, 1933 - 1939', in Mommsen and Kettenacker, *The Fascist Challenge* .

such structural constraints confirmed rather than forced Chamberlain's determination to oppose collaboration with the Soviets. The opinions of the dominion powers as well as east European countries, for example, were repeatedly raised in Cabinet meetings throughout 1938 and 1939. But it is very difficult to believe that Chamberlain would have really bowed to their demands and allowed the opinions of others to dictate a foreign policy with which he did not agree. Rather than have any influence upon the decisions taken by London, their opinions simply mirrored those already held by Chamberlain and other ministers. Their views were identical not influential.

Constraints such as Polish and Rumanian opposition to Soviet troops crossing their territory did appear to be a critical strategic consideration. Yet, two important points need to be made regarding their position. Firstly, despite the claims of several ministers during the Sudetenland crisis, the Rumanian government was never as decisively opposed to cooperating with the Soviet government as was Warsaw.[98] Thus, such wavering would have easily enabled London to persuade the Rumanians to join an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance if that is what it wanted. Secondly, at the end of September and before the Munich settlement was agreed, the Rumanian government did give permission for Moscow to send aircraft through Rumanian airspace. Admittedly, the Rumanians had little choice, their anti-aircraft defences were too weak to stop Soviet aircraft.[99] With respect to Poland, it is worth noting that the British government made no effort to persuade Warsaw to agree to an alliance, either in 1938 or 1939. Poland existed between two traditionally hostile giants. Yet, neither Chamberlain not his cabinet took advantage of Poland's predicament. Furthermore, even if British efforts to persuade the Poles to allow Soviet troops through their territory failed, this still did not render an Anglo-French-Soviet

[98] Newton to Halifax. 29 Apr, 1938. no. 163. D.B.F.P., 3, I.
[99] Adamthwaite, *France*, p. 204.

alliance entirely ineffective. Amongst other attributes, for example, the Soviets could have exerted direct pressure upon Germany in the Baltic by blockading the German trade route with Scandinavia, thereby interrupting supplies of important materials such as iron ore.[100]

The above arguments undermine to a certain extent the suggestion that strategic and political difficulties dictated British foreign policy towards the Soviet Union. The most convincing evidence of their secondary importance however is the fact that on the two occasions when ministers perceived a greater threat facing Britain than Soviet expansionism, they agreed to Soviet involvement in the resistance to aggression.[101] This will be discussed in more detail throughout the thesis.

One factor that contributed to ministers changing their minds about Anglo - Soviet collaboration was their changing perceptions of Germany. Before September, the Cabinet shared Chamberlain's belief that Hitler's actions in Europe to date, namely the remilitarisation of the Rhineland and the Anschluss, had been driven by no more than a desire to redress the grievances of Versailles and incorporate all Germans in the Reich. With the exception of Duff Cooper, they all, therefore, supported the policy of conciliation towards the German dictator. The Cabinet continued to believe in the possibility of an Anglo-German agreement throughout 1938 - 1939. But following Munich, particularly during the winter of 1938 - 1939, ministers received intelligence reports which challenged their images of Hitler and his ambitions.[102] It is notable that during this period military intelligence reports also evoked a new optimism about the

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[100] Williamson Murray, *The Change in the European Balance of Power 1938-9,* (New Jersey, 1984), p. 124.

[101] *Chapters 2 and 6.*

[102] Wesley Wark, 'Something Very Stern: British Political Intelligence, Moralism and Grand Strategy in 1939', *Intelligence and National Security,* Vol. V, (1990).

military balance of power.[103] To what extent, then, one may ask, were attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration dictated by perceptions of Hitler and a belief in the possibility of an Anglo-German agreement? One interpretation could be that support for the diplomatic exclusion of the Soviet Union during 1938 reflected the ministers' convictions that Hitler's aims were limited. The diplomatic contacts made with Moscow yet the resistance to an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance during the winter of 1938 and 1939 could be said to have reflected the continued hope of an agreement with Berlin yet a changing perception of Germany's dictator (as well as Britain's own military standing). Certainly views of Hitler and of the prospects of an Anglo- German agreement were important when deciding policy towards Moscow. However, they were not directly influential. Rather, they were *indirect* influences. Thus, the desire for, and belief in the possibility of, an Anglo-German agreement only remained influential as one of several reasons for ministers not to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices. As long as one believed a pact with the German dictator was still possible, there existed no reason to fear Soviet isolationism and no reason, therefore, to overlook hostility and distrust. Intelligence reports and the actions of Hitler during March 1939 affected the ministers' perceptions of Hitler enough to weaken the influence of their anti-Soviet attitudes, but not to the extent that such prejudices were overlooked altogether and Soviet proposals of an alliance accepted.[104]

Inextricably linked to the belief in, and pursuit of, an Anglo-German agreement by the British government is the suggestion that the aims of London and Moscow were simply incompatible.[105] However, it is possible to challenge whether the aims of the West and of the Soviet Union were really as

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[103] Wark, *Ultimate Enemy*, p. 232-4.
[104] For more discussion on the influence of perceptions of Hitler see *Chapter 2.*
[105] Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, p. 6.

incompatible as some contemporaries and historians have suggested. In 1938, in particular, Moscow did not want to go to war. Rather, its aim was to bluff the German dictator into retreating. The Soviet government was willing to go to war if necessary, but it sincerely believed that Hitler could be deterred.[106] Alleged strategical constraints were irrelevant to such a policy. Some British officials warned that such a bluff would be called by Hitler. Nevile Henderson, for example, 'thought that Herr Hitler attached little importance to Russia except as regards aeroplanes, and that he would go forward against a combination of France, Russia and this country.'[107] In his memoirs, William Strang, an official in, and later head of, the Central Department within the Foreign Office, wrote;

> Hitler himself and the German General Staff seem to have thought it quite likely that the Soviet Government would intervene in arms if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia; but they seem also to have thought that Soviet intervention, what with the recent great military purge and geographical difficulties, would not reach serious proportions and could be discounted.[108]

Furthermore, ministers were concerned by the fact that a bluff would make war wholly dependent upon Hitler. It would take the decision for war away from the West. 'I am satisfied', Chamberlain wrote to his sister, 'that we should be wrong to allow the most vital decision that any country could take, the decision as to peace or war, to pass out of our own hands into those of the ruler of another country...'[109]

Such fear of the decision for war being in the hands of another was legitimate, but the decision for war would always be taken by the aggressor. Reports that Hitler would certainly act against such a bluff, on the other hand, were based

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[106] Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War,* (London, 1995), pp. 49-50.
[107] CAB 23 / 94 Cab 37 30 Aug, 1938.
[108] Strang, *Home and Abroad*, p. 149.
[109] Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain. 11 Sept, 1938. Cited in Preston, *General Staffs*, p. 124.

purely upon supposition, and notably the supposition of one who admitted his own prejudice against the Soviet Union.[110] In the case of Nevile Henderson, especially, it is worth noting that his reports were probably influenced by the fact that he knew both Chamberlain and Halifax opposed Soviet involvement for their own reasons and so that such reports would have been well received.[111] Several historians have since substantiated the opinions of Henderson and Strang, arguing that evidence released after the war shows Hitler's willingness to go to war against Britain, France and the Soviet Union during 1938. Donald Cameron Watt, for example, argues that following the May Crisis, Hitler became determined to smash Czechoslovakia come what may.[112] Research by Keith Robbins found that when assessing the reactions of possible opponents to an attack on Czechoslovakia, Hitler believed at worst that he would be opposed by Britain, France and the Soviet Union, and that this still did not rule out the feasibility of an attack.[113] It is not coincidental that these historians belong to the 'Revisionist' school of thought and thereby largely defend Chamberlain's foreign policy decisions during this period. Moreover, the evidence put forward in such literature still does not prove that a bluff would have failed.

Considering the evidence available today one can argue that a bluff may have succeeded. Hitler had backed down twice before in the face of joint resistance.[114] Although intelligence reports stated that Hitler did appear determined to attack Czechoslovakia, they also revealed that both the German army and industrialists acknowledged that Germany was in no condition to sustain a

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[110] Henderson to Halifax. 31 May, 1939. FO 800 / 270; Henderson to Halifax. 17 June, 1939. FO 800 / 315 . Henderson Papers. Public Record Office.
[111] Peter Neville, *Appeasing Hitler,* (London, 2000), p. 69; Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security,* (London, 1984), p. 167.
[112] Watt, 'The May Crisis of 1938', p. 475.
[113] Robbins, *Munich,* p. 336.
[114] Watt, '*Appeasement*", p. 195.

protracted war.[115] Furthermore, the German people were said to be united against war.[116] Consequently, several individuals involved in intelligence, including Robert Vansittart, the Chief Diplomatic Adviser, and Mason MacFarlane, Britain's military attaché in Berlin, believed a resolute stand by Britain would force Hitler to back down.[117]

Although each country was undermined by military weaknesses, the combined efforts of Britain, France and the Soviet Union would have posed serious, and very possibly, successful resistance to Germany in 1938 and 1939.[118] 'German armed forces in September 1938, in terms of war readiness and overall mobilised strength, were a much inferior foe compared to the military machine' of 1940.[119] Germany's military strength grew throughout 1939. Still, when the 'test of war came' in 1939, G. Peden points out;

> Britain was able to contribute to the Allied cause the world's largest navy, an aircraft industry which outproduced Germany in 1940, and an army which was just large enough to deny the German army any decisive advantage in men or quality of equipment.[120]

Moreover, such achievements were made, and survival sustained, without the second front and valuable resources a Soviet ally would have brought. It is not surprising, then, that despite his statements of confidence, there is evidence to suggest that Hitler realised the potential of such an alliance and actually feared having to fight a war involving the Soviet Union. The German dictator did not want the Soviet Union involved in any guarantee of the remainder of

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[115] Memoranda by Vansittart. 21 Mar, 1938. VNST 1, 1/23; 20 Jan, 1938. VNST 11, 2/16. Cited in, John R. Ferris, ' 'Indulged in All Too Little'?: Vansittart, Intelligence and Appeasement', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. VI, (1995), p. 153

[116] Ibid, p. 155.

[117] Mason MacFarlane to Henderson. 26 July, 1938. pp. 683-6. D.B.F.P., 3, II; Memoranda by Mason MacFarlane 25 and 27 July, 1938. FO 371 / 21663. Cited in Ibid, p. 156; pp. 158-9.

[118] Watt, '*Appeasement*", p. 195.

[119] Wark, *Ultimate Enemy*, p. 231.

[120] Peden, *British Rearmament* , p. 184. Cited in David Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain,* (London, 2001), p. 178. See also, Martin Alexander, 'The Fall of France, 1940', *Journal of Strategic Studies,* Vol. XIII, (1990), p. 33.

Czechoslovakia, for example.[121] He wanted to avoid all possibility of confrontation with the Soviet Union, and he would not have insisted upon Moscow's exclusion from a guarantee of Czechoslovakia unless he genuinely feared that the Soviet Union could seriously hinder Germany's foreign policy ambitions. Indeed, such concern expressed itself a year later through German attempts to ensure Soviet neutrality in the event of war, which finally led to the conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact. As a result, it is equally permissible to suggest that the German dictator would have been deterred from taking action against Czechoslovakia in 1938. It is likely that Hitler would have taken aggressive steps at some stage, but it would have been possible until then for the British, Soviets and French to organise future military cooperation. Yet, the British Cabinet chose not to debate the possibility of bluff. It was briefly mentioned on one or two occasions, but Cabinet records show no detailed examination of the evidence. Instead Chamberlain and some of his colleagues deliberately proposed war as the only alternative to a policy of conciliation because this enabled them to repeatedly highlight the structural constraints that appeared to support their underlying wish to avoid collaboration with the Soviets.

The British government then, could, and should, have at least attempted to deter an intended resistance against German aggression over the Sudetenland. Aversion to military alliances , British military and economic weakness and the opposition to Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration from the dominion governments and other governments involved in the crisis should have had no bearing on the inclusion of Soviet representatives to settle the Sudetenland crisis peacefully. The aims of the British and Soviet governments were not impossibly incompatible . London may have discovered this if it had made the effort to discuss Soviet foreign policy intentions with Moscow itself. The

[121] CAB 23 / 96 Cab. 57 30 Nov, 1938.

contention by some ministers that contact with Moscow, if only to discuss peaceful measures, could not be made for fear of antagonising the Germans, was weak. It suggested that the British government was forced into excluding the Soviet Union against its wishes. In fact, ministers and officials were only too eager to abide by Berlin's wishes regarding the exclusion of Moscow.[122] In 1939, when fears of a German - Soviet rapprochement had begun to persuade ministers and officials to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices, several finally admitted the deterrence value of cooperation between Britain, France and the Soviet Union.[123]

The inadequacies of the reasons put forward by ministers at the time and several historians since, are evident. This alone, however, does not substantiate the contention of this chapter and thesis. The inadequacies of the reasons put forward by certain ministers are accentuated if one looks at the admissions and explanations given by officials and ministers in meetings, but especially in their private correspondence. When individuals believed they were writing in confidence, or when, in May 1939, they were forced to explain their sudden change in attitude towards Anglo-French - Soviet collaboration, ministers and officials revealed the real motivation behind British policy towards the Soviet Union. Thus, the most compelling evidence in support of the contention of this thesis exists in the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee minutes, Foreign Office reports and private papers of the decision makers during 1937 - 1939.

A detailed examination of such papers throughout Chamberlain's premiership reveals the existence of a deep seated suspicion and hostility towards the Soviet Union among ministers and officials that derived ultimately from ideological

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[122] Letter to Henderson from Halifax. 12 May, 1938; Letter from Henderson to Cadogan. 30 Mar, 1938.FO 800 / 269. Henderson Papers ; Halifax to Phipps. 17 June, 1938. no. 421. D.B.F.P., 3, I.

[123] CAB 27 / 625 47 Mtg. 16 May, 1939; Foreign Office memorandum on the Anglo-Soviet negotiations. 22 May, 1939. no. 589. D.B.F.P., 3, V.

differences.[124] Neville Chamberlain, as Prime Minister and so the ultimate decision maker, is an important example. In his private papers, Chamberlain repeatedly admitted his 'most profound distrust of Russia."[125] His distrust stemmed from a perception of Communism as the enemy of civilisation. Indeed, throughout his premiership, Chamberlain believed that Communist expansion remained the main threat. It was far greater than any expansion threatened by German racial philosophies.[126] Consequently, Germany and Britain were perceived to be natural allies in the face of the enemy. Chamberlain told King George VI that he had 'sketched out the prospect of Germany and England as the two pillars of European peace and buttresses against Communism."[127] It is not surprising, then, that Chamberlain believed Soviet proposals of collaboration were intended only to divide Germany and Britain in order to defeat the resistance they represented to Moscow's intention to expand Communism. He was convinced that the Soviets were 'stealthily and cunningly pulling all the strings behind the scenes to get us involved in war with Germany.'[128] In Chamberlain's mind, the ideological divide between Britain and the Soviet Union meant Soviet intentions could never be the same as those of the West, and as such, would always be suspicious. Such admissions by the Prime Minister greatly undermine the suggestion that he in fact perceived there to be little difference between Germany and the Soviet Union, and that his foreign policy decisions were not based on likes and dislikes. Indeed the contention that Chamberlain 'only drew attention to the fact that the Soviet Union was not swaddled in pure white when his critics found something uniquely wicked in Hitler's Germany'[129] , is shown to be a significant

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[124] Taylor, *World War*; Sydney Aster, *The Making of the Second World War,* (London, 1973), pp. 184-185; Carley, *The Alliance,* p. XVIII.

[125] Feiling, *Chamberlain*, p. 403.

[126] Andrew Roberts, *The Holy Fox. A Biography of Lord Halifax,* (London, 1991), p. 107.

[127] Mr Chamberlain to King George VI, 13 Sept, 1938. R.A.G.VI. Conf 235. Cited in John W. Wheeler Bennett, *King George VI His Life and Reign,* (London, 1958), pp. 346-8.

[128] Dilks *Cadogan Diaries*, p. 65; Amery, *My Political Life*, pp. 262-3.

[129] Robbins, *Munich,* pp. 158-159.

underestimation of the Prime Minister's personal attitudes. Chamberlain's hostility towards the Soviet Union was much greater than his opposition to the internal system of Germany.

Chamberlain's close friends and immediate advisers shared his passionate suspicion of Moscow's intentions. According to Theo Kordt, Counsellor of the German embassy in London, Sir Horace Wilson, the Chief Industrial Adviser to the government and confidant of the Prime Minister, thought it would be the height of folly if two leading 'white races' exterminated each other in war because only bolshevism would profit.[130] Halifax, who, as Viceroy, had worked hard to suppress Communist influence in India in 1927,[131] was also 'very suspicious of Soviet Russia.'[132] Later, he admitted he held '...considerable distrust of Bolshevik guarantees and undertakings, and thought that in all these matters the policy of the Soviet government would, in the last resort, be governed by what that government thought at the time best in their own interests.'[133] Of the other two ministers who played a significant role in the decision making process as members of what has been termed 'the inner cabinet'[134] , Sir John Simon said very little about the Soviet Union either in private or in the Cabinet.[135] Samuel Hoare on the other hand, held very strong views of the Soviet Union[136] and frequently aired them. During the first few months of Chamberlain's premiership, Hoare, as First Lord of the Admiralty, had voiced his opposition to any collaboration with the Soviets regarding the

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[130] Kordt to Weizsacker. 23 Aug, 1938. no. 382. German Documents Foreign Policy, Series D, Volume II. Hereafter referred to as D.G.F.P., D, II.
[131] Roberts, *Holy Fox,* p. 107.
[132] Ibid; Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 121. 19 Mar, 1939.
[133] Strang, *Home and Abroad,* p. 133; Parker, *Appeasement,* p. 175.
[134] Samuel Hoare (Lord Templewood), *Nine Troubled Years,* (London, 1954, p. 291.
[135] Simon's private papers at the Bodleian library Oxford show no record of his opinions of the Soviet Union.
[136] Hoare had gained considerable knowledge of Russia during his intelligence mission between 1916 - 1917. See, John Arthur Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare: A Political Biography,* (London, 1977), pp. 39-51; pp. 294-8.

Spanish civil war. Communist expansion, he warned, existed as a real threat to Britain: 'On no account must we do anything to bolster up Communism in Spain, particularly when it is remembered that Communism in Portugal, to which it would probably spread and particularly Lisbon, would be a grave danger to the British Empire.'[137] Hoare was not alone in making such comments. At the time, Lord Chatfield, First Sea Lord, expressed his aversion to Communism, declaring that Franco's cause was 'much nobler than the Reds.'[138] During 1938, Chatfield said little about the Soviet Union, but Hoare remained aware of 'stock Communist propaganda' and the 'mischief' it could make.[139] As Home Secretary, he had to deal with the brawls that occurred between Communists and Fascists in East London[140] , and the complaints of British religious denominations about Moscow's support of anti-religious organisations.[141] Though such events in fact posed no threat to Britain's security, what appeared to be the infiltration of Communist influence could only have added to Hoare's hostility towards Moscow and his conviction that Soviet intentions were to the detriment of Britain. Indeed, like Chamberlain, Hoare believed that Moscow's proposals of collaboration during 1938 were intended only to bring about war between Britain and Germany, thus allowing for Communist expansion.[142] The Marquis of Zetland, Secretary of State for India, agreed, warning the Cabinet that world war 'would bring about the destruction of the present world order and the emergence of something which might approximate to the ideals of those who controlled the destiny of Russia.'[143]

Others who voiced their distrust of Soviet declarations in the foreign policy

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[137] FO 371/ 20527. W 7781/62/41. Cited in Edwards, *The British Government*, p. 23.
[138] Lawrence E. Pratt, *East of Malta, West of Suez*, (Cambridge), p. 43. n. 35. Cited Ibid, p. 24.
[139] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 302.
[140] Cross, *Samuel Hoare*, pp. 282-3.
[141] Hoare's Speeches; 'Daily Debates', 3 Feb, 1938. File 6. Lord Templewood's Papers.
[142] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 302.
[143] CAB 23 / 95 Cab 39 17 Sept, 1938.

committee included Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under Secretary in the Foreign Office,[144] and R. A. Butler who believed 'both on political and military grounds, the USSR could not be trusted...' to act outside its own interests.[145] To act in one's own interest, in itself, was, and still is, customary for governments. For many within Britain, however, Soviet self-interest was thought of as being in the interests of Communism. Even the Chiefs of Staff, generally trusted to provide objective accurate military information upon which the politicians could decide policy, were not exempt from such prejudicial views. They, too, distrusted the Soviet government and its declarations. In 1938 they believed Moscow had no intention of going to war over Czechoslovakia. A report dated 25 April, stated that the Soviet government 'will go to almost any lengths...to avoid hostilities', and that it was 'unsafe to assume that Soviet Russia would carry out her obligations towards Czechoslovakia."[146] Furthermore the report warned that Moscow would not be 'backward in stirring up hostilities' in order to provoke a war in which it had no intention of officially participating in.[147] The Chiefs of Staff, unlike most Cabinet ministers, were prepared to admit that such distrust and judgment was subjective and a 'matter of opinion.'[148] Nevertheless, they continued to warn that in their opinion the Soviet Union remained 'incalculable.'[149] Such distrust of and aversion towards the 'Red danger"[150] not only existed within Britain. Indeed, ministers recognised the existence and influence of such prejudices upon the foreign policies of other governments. Fear of 'giving a handle to German anti-Communist propaganda'[151] , for example, was often noted.

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[144] Minute by Cadogan. FO 371 / 22276 . Cited in Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, p. 93.
[145] Butler, *Art of the Possible*, p. 72.
[146] CAB 53 / 38. C.O.S. 716 . 25 Apr, 1938.
[147] Ibid.
[148] CAB 53 / 9. C.O.S. 232. 21 Mar, 1938.
[149] CAB 53 / 41 C.O.S. 764. 13 Sept, 1938.
[150] CAB 27 / 624 43mtg. 19 Apr, 1939; Minute by Sir A. Cadogan. 1 Feb, 1939. no. 76. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[151] Amery, *My Political Life*, pp. 317-318; Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 285. 29 Apr, 1939.

Despite admitting their own distrust of the Soviet Union and recognising the ideological suspicion of so many others, a number of individuals still denied the importance of such prejudices, albeit on few occasions, during this period. Alexander Cadogan, for example, argued that foreign policy decisions were purely practical. In response to minutes circulating within the Foreign Office concerning the relative threat of fascism and communism, Cadogan wrote;

> I personally,..., think it otiose to discuss whether Fascism or Communism is the more dangerous to us. It is quite plain that, at the moment, the former is the more dangerous to us, because it is the more efficient, and makes more and better guns and aeroplanes.[152]

Even the Prime Minister denied the influence of 'ideological differences' and said that 'the suggestion that we despise the assistance of the Soviet Union is without foundation.'[153] But such suggestions did have foundation. Comments during official meetings and the private papers of numerous politicians and officials, revealed the existence and influence of distrust. Later, for example, Halifax admitted his 'cynical appreciation' of Soviet intentions had persuaded him 'to make a narrower arrangement with Soviet Russia...than he would be prepared to make with a partner in whom he felt trust and confidence.'[154] Moreover, such prejudice was admitted after the war, when ministers were no longer under pressure to deny its influence. Samuel Hoare wrote in his memoirs, Nine Troubled Years, that the decision making process was 'undoubtedly influenced by suspicion of the Soviet.' Nor did he apologise. There were 'solid reasons for distrusting the Soviet.' Indeed, Hoare explained, 'whilst we fully realised that the prejudices of the past should not affect our later policy, we should not have been human if we had not been influenced by this long record of Russian duplicity and hostility.'[155]

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[152] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 132-133.
[153] Cols. 1836-9. 347 HC Debs 5s.
[154] CAB 27 / 625 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.
[155] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 350.

Thus, the widespread hostility towards, and intense suspicion of, the Soviet Union amongst government ministers and Chiefs of Staff stemmed from decades of animosity. In his memoirs, the Home Secretary explained further:

> For more than twenty years successive British Governments had suffered from Russian plots and intrigues. British party politics had been constantly poisoned by Russian propaganda. Russian secret agents were continuously exploiting any chance of stirring trouble, Russian money was finding its way into the pockets of British agitators. The Zinoviev letter that created so resounding a sensation in 1924 was not an isolated instance of Russian interference in our affairs. The attempts to incite mutinies in the fighting services and strikes in the ranks of Labour went unabated during the whole period between the two wars, and the Russian embassy never ceased to be a centre of espionage and agitation.[156]

Hoare's recollection of Soviet infiltration 'during the whole period between the two wars' is an exaggeration. Like many other former ministers writing their memoirs during the 1950s, it is most likely that Hoare was influenced by the growing antagonism between the West and its former war time ally over central and eastern Europe. The Home Secretary's description of the animosity that existed throughout the 1920s, however, is accurate. Russia was first perceived to represent an ideological threat to the West following the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. The creation of the Communist International, otherwise known as the Comintern, soon after, confirmed for many the belief that there existed a real danger of Communist expansion. Indeed, fear of Communism at least partly contributed to the abatement of hostility towards the Germans after the war. [157]

During the 1920s, Moscow did much to reaffirm such fears and suspicions. Decisions taken showed little or no intention to cooperate, but instead a determination to undermine democracy, including the British government. Lenin's government collaborated with anti-British forces in the Middle East.

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[156] Ibid.
[157] Robbins, *Munich*, p. 19.

The Comintern circulated subversive Communist propaganda within Britain and India. Though it was largely Conservative party members that spoke out against Communism, fear and distrust also existed within the Labour party. Members of the Labour party had, at times, been willing to speak out in support of the Soviet Union, especially regarding allied intervention in the Russian civil war during the years after the Bolshevik revolution. In 1924, the newly elected Labour government granted diplomatic recognition to the Soviet State. Yet throughout, the Labour party rejected Communist affiliations for membership.[158] The apprehension that prevailed amongst all political parties regarding the Communist threat during this period was typified by two scandals, namely the case of J. R. Campbell and the case of the Zinoviev letter, both of which led to Conservatives accusing the Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald of leniency towards the Communists. Suspicion and fear of Communist expansion emanating from Moscow continued and again appeared to many to be reaffirmed by the general strike in 1926 and uprisings in both China and India in 1927. In the same year, for the first time, the British government acted to resist what it perceived to be the threat posed by Communism. Hence the offices of Soviet diplomatic representatives were raided following information that they were engaged in subversive activities.[159] With the issues of trade and compensation for British investors in Russia before the revolution still unresolved, the 1930s begun, for Conservative politicians at least, on a basis of resentment and distrust. Despite a grudging acceptance of the Soviet Union as a member of the League of Nations in 1934, many within the British political elite continued to believe Moscow remained intent on Communist expansion. Indeed, such fear was to play a decisive part in the

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[158] See S. R. Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, (Cambridge Mass., 1956); L. J. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party,* (London, 1966), pp. 94 - 109. Cited in Ibid.

[159] Christopher Andrews, 'The British Secret Service and Anglo-Soviet Relations in the 1920s', *The Historical Journal,* Vol. XX, (1977), PP. 673-706. For more on British Intelligence in the inter war period see, C. M. Andrews, *Secret Service. The Making of the British Intelligence; Community,* (London, 1985).

foreign policy decisions taken by the Baldwin government regarding the Spanish civil war[160] , only a year before Chamberlain became Prime Minister.[161]

That ideological distrust and hostility remained amongst politicians during Chamberlain's premiership, then, is not surprising and perhaps understandable. Such attitudes had become almost inherent within the political elite. Yet the word 'prejudice', used in this chapter and thesis to describe such opinions, is deliberate. Despite its history, no substantial evidence existed during Chamberlain's premiership, not at least until July 1939, that Moscow's feelers to the West were in fact insincere and a means to ensure the future expansion of Communism. Certainly Stalin's priority was the future security of his own country. Jonathan Haslam is right to point out that Stalin's adherence to a policy of collective security was not due to his concern for peace in Europe. One cannot dismiss entirely the suggestion that Moscow continued to hope for improved German - Soviet relations until 1937.[162] But this was not incompatible with a policy of cooperation with the West. The fact is that from 1933 onwards, the Soviet government did pursue a policy of collective security which the British and French could have embraced. Thus, the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations in 1934 and in May 1935 signed mutual assistance pacts with France and Czechoslovakia. The Comintern announced a new Popular Front policy, urging European Communist parties to ally with liberals, social

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[160] Edwards, *The British Government,* p. 3.

[161] Useful literature on the history of Anglo-Soviet relations between 1917 - 1936 includes: Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921, Intervention and the War,* Vol. 1, (New Jersey and Oxford, 1961); Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Existence: Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1973,* second ed., (New York, 1968); Gabriel Gorodetsky, *The Precarious Truce: Anglo-Soviet Relations 1924-1927,* (Cambridge, 1977); Jiri Hochman, *The Soviet Union and the Failure of Collective Security, 1934-1939,* (Ithaca, 1984); Haslam, *Collective Security.*

[162] Jonathan Haslam, 'Soviet-German Relations and the Origins of the Second World War: The Jury Is Still Out', *Journal of Modern History,* Vol. LXIX, (1997). Haslam points out that it is entirely plausible that Stalin held two completely incompatible ideas in his mind at the same time, namely a dedication to collective security policy and a hope for better relations with Germany.

democrats and anyone who opposed fascism.[163] Moscow, as a member of the League participated in the imposition of sanctions on Italy after Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935[164] , and called for action against Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland in March 1936.

In contrast, following Hitler's election in 1933, Germany withdrew from the League of Nations and began to rearm. Throughout the 1930s Berlin embarked on an aggressive foreign policy which included marching into the Rhineland, intervening almost immediately in the Spanish civil war, declaring the Anschluss in March 1938, and threatening invasion of the Czech Sudetenland by September. During this period, the British public also learnt of the persecution of the Jews and other minorities within Germany. What was known about Stalin's purges was equally abhorrent. Yet, much had occurred to suggest to any objective observer of the international situation that Nazi Germany was in fact Britain's greatest threat. Despite this, members of the Conservative party in particular continued to 'believe Nazis on the whole are more conservative than communists and socialists."[165] Even during the war, members of the British political elite continued to make comments such as; 'no doubt that the Soviet government is even worse than Hitler's, and it will be a misfortune if it survives."[166] The depth of ideological suspicion amongst certain members of the British political elite was such that neither the actions of the German nor Soviet governments during the 1930s would have made any significant difference.

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[163] For critical analysis of the Comintern see, E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The "Moscow Line" and International Communist Policy, 1933 - 1947', in Chris Wrigley ed., *Warfare, Diplomacy and Politics*, (London, 1986); Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe ed., *International Communism and the Communist International 1919 - 1943*, (Manchester, 1998); Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, p. 2.

[164] Lowell R. Tillett, 'The Soviet Role in League Sanctions against Italy, 1935-1936, *The American Slavic and East European Review*; R. A. C. Parker, 'Great Britain, France and the Ethiopian Crisis', *English Historical Review*, (1974].

[165] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 222. 18 Nov, 1939.

[166] Bertrand Russell. Cited in M. Gilbert and R. Gott, *Appeasers*, pp. 7-8.

In addition to the evident hostility and distrust that existed within the Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and Chiefs of Staff, politicians and officials also shared a perception of the Soviet Union as militarily ineffective, and emphasised this as a crucial influence upon the foreign policy decisions taken.[167] As early as April 1938, for example, Halifax was convinced that the Soviet Union could not 'be counted upon for any substantial contribution to the defence of Czechoslovakia.'[168] Alexander Cadogan, agreed. The Soviet Union was capable of defending itself but had little offensive strength.[169] Samuel Hoare similarly wrote that 'after the great purge of the Russian army' Stalin was in no 'position to join in coercive action against Hitler'[170] , and Sir John Simon damned the Soviet Union as 'useless as an ally.'[171] Neville Chamberlain, in particular, repeatedly pointed to Soviet military weakness during 1939 as a reason to oppose an alliance with Moscow to resist German aggression.[172] He described those in the House of Commons who 'believe that Russia is the key to our salvation' as 'pathetic.'[173] Unlike other opinions of the Russians, this perception of the Russian armed forces was not historic. Indeed, during the Great War, Tsarist Russia was thought of as the great steamroller, capable of seriously hindering the German army.[174] The belief that the Soviet Union was militarily weak existed only from 1937 onwards and was a result of the undermining of the Soviet forces as a result of Stalin's purges. The Foreign Office had received reports throughout 1938 stating that the 'army had...been seriously weakened by recent events.' Officials in Moscow estimated that 'about

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[167] Hoare, *Troubled Years.*
[168] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, p. 72. 28 Apr, 1939.
[169] CAB 27 / 624 43mtg. 19 Apr, 1939; Minute by Sir A. Cadogan. 1 Feb, 1939, no. 76. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[170] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 302.
[171] CAB 23 / 95 Cab. 43 25 Sept, 1938.
[172] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 30. 24 May, 1939.
[173] Chamberlain to Ida. 9 Apr, 1939. NC 18 / 1/ 1093. Chamberlain Papers. Birmingham University archives.
[174] Statement given by Halifax to the foreign policy committee, 23 Feb, 1939. G/ 23/ 1/ 8. Lloyd George Papers. House of Lords Archives.

65 per cent of general officers had been liquidated...' Even if the Soviet Union were militarily capable, reports stated that the transport system would not stand the strain of war.[175] The Chiefs of Staff, unsurprisingly then, also concluded that the Soviet armed forces were incapable of waging an effective war over Czechoslovakia.[176]

Evidence of the destruction caused by Stalin's purges alone strengthens the argument that Soviet military weakness was an important consideration. Ministers and military experts were justified in their concerns. Like the various structural constraints put forward by Cabinet ministers, however, Soviet military weakness was not a *dominant* influence upon the decisions made regarding the Soviet Union. Firstly this can be confirmed by the fact that ministers later acknowledged the military potential of the Soviet Union when it appeared that assistance might be needed. Halifax, in February 1939, for example, explained that the best 'way to describe Russia now is something between the 1914 attitude of "the unconquerable steam roller" and looking on her as entirely useless militarily. We cannot ignore a population of 180, 000, 000 people.'[177] Chamberlain told the House of Commons in May 1939 that '...no one would be so foolish as to suppose that that huge country, with its vast population and enormous resources, would be a negligible factor in war."[178] He even admitted that if Poland and Rumania were attacked 'there would be good reasons on the merits of the case for trying to secure some measure of Soviet participation.'[179] The Minister for Coordination of Defence, Lord Chatfield, told the Prime Minister in May 1939 that the 'active and whole hearted assistance of Russia as our ally would be of *appreciable value* particularly in containing

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[175] Vereker to Halifax. 23 May, 1938. no. 222. D.B.F.P., 3, I. See *Chapter 3.*
[176] CAB 53 / 38 C.O.S. 716. 25 Apr, 1938.
[177] Statement given by Halifax to the foreign policy committee, 23 February, 1939. G/ 23/ 1/ 8. Lloyd George Papers.
[178] Cols. 1836-9. 19 May, 1939. 347 HC Deb 5s.
[179] CAB 23 / 98 Cab. 15. 29 Mar, 1939.

substantial enemy forces and in supplying war material to our other allies in Eastern Europe.'[180] He continued, 'there was no doubt that the possibility of war with Russia was a great deterrent to Germany who greatly feared having to conduct a war both on the East and on the West.'[181] Even R. A. Butler, a dedicated supporter of Chamberlain and his opposition to closer Anglo-Soviet collaboration, admitted in June that 'history showed us that Russia was needed if a balance of power in Europe was to be preserved.'[182]

In addition, and more importantly, ministers themselves admitted the secondary importance of their military perceptions of the Soviet Union (compared to their ideological suspicion). In a conversation with the Labour M.P., Hugh Dalton, for example, Chamberlain confessed that even if Soviet forces were capable of launching an effective offensive, he still could not trust Moscow.[183] As Sir Alexander Cadogan so aptly commented, Chamberlain was 'a man of prejudices which were not easily eradicated.'[184] The relatively few remarks made about Soviet military potential compared with the influx of information from Moscow's military attachés during 1938 exemplified its secondary importance in the minds of the decision makers, and this was to be confirmed further by events during September.[185]

Looking at the foreign policy and private papers of the British government regarding the Soviet Union between May 1937 - August 1938 provides an important context for this thesis. The reasons put forward by ministers for the deliberate exclusion of the Soviet Union from the Czechoslovakian settlement,

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[180] My Italics. CAB 27 / 625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Report on talk over dinner with Aga Khan. 29 June, 1939. RAB F79. Butler Papers.
[183] Hugh Dalton, *Hugh Dalton Memoirs: The Fateful Years*, (London, 1957), p. 180.
[184] Letter from Sir A. Cadogan to Sir Samuel Hoare, 26 Oct, 1951. Lord Templewood Papers. Cambridge University Library.
[185] *Chapter 2.*

and for the rejection of Soviet proposals for collaboration thereafter, were false. What dominated the minds of those involved in the foreign policy decision making process towards the Soviet Union was an intense hostility and suspicion derived primarily from ideological differences. Though events from 1934 onwards show that such ideological distrust was largely unfounded, the history of Anglo-Soviet relations illustrates amply why it was difficult for many to change their views of the Soviet Union. Ministers *could* and *should*, however, have *put aside* such views. The remainder of this thesis examines further the attitudes of the British political elite towards the Soviet Union, and puts forward evidence to show that it was, in fact, the *unwillingness of certain individuals to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices during the foreign policy decision making process*, and not the existence of such prejudice in itself, that determined policy towards the Soviet Union.

Chapter Two:

Attitudes of the British Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and Chiefs of Staff towards the Soviet Union, September 1938 - March 1939.

Between 1 - 30 September 1938, several ministers within Neville Chamberlain's Cabinet, if only temporarily, considered cooperation with the Soviet Union over the Sudetenland crisis. Between October 1938 - March 1939, Halifax made an effort to rebuild Anglo-Soviet relations. Despite this, British foreign policy towards the Soviet Union did not change during this period. Hence, the Soviet government was excluded from the Munich conference and there remained no intention on the part of London to collaborate with Moscow regarding the resistance to future German aggression. Nevertheless, what such consideration of cooperation and concern about Soviet reactions revealed is that British foreign policy towards the Soviet Union was not a result of impossible structural constraints, but rather a matter of willingness to put aside the anti-Soviet prejudices many continued to hold.

As a result of the announcement that there would be additional German troop movements and partial mobilisation in September, on 2 September Litvinov proposed to the French government not only an appeal to the League , but also immediate joint military talks and an Anglo-French-Soviet declaration of resolve.[186] On 12 September, riots erupted in the Sudetenland following Hitler's speech at Nuremburg, in which the German dictator stated his support for the Sudeten German struggle for autonomy. Neville Chamberlain decided, without consulting either the French or Soviet governments, or indeed his own Cabinet

[186] François - Poncet, *The Fateful Years*; Georges Bonnet, *Défence* , pp. 199-201; Telegram from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R to the Soviet Minister of Czechoslovakia. 2 Sept. 1938. Doc. 26. *New Documents on the History of Munich,* (Prague, 1958).Cited in, Thorne, *Approach of War,* pp. 69-70.

until the last minute, that he would visit Hitler. The two men discussed the Sudeten crisis on 15 September at Berchtesgaden. Chamberlain protested against any use of force by the German government. He did not, however, oppose Hitler's demand that Czechoslovakia's pacts with the French and Soviet governments should be invalidated.[187] Finally, Chamberlain agreed to the detachment of Sudeten areas, although he informed Hitler that both the British Cabinet and the French government would have to be consulted. On 18 September, Daladier and Bonnet were invited to a conference in Downing Street in order that they 'should know exactly what had happened at Berchtesgaden, and what was likely to emerge at the Prime Minister's next meeting."[188] The Soviet government, which also had a treaty of assistance with Czechoslovakia, was not invited to the conference, nor, indeed, informed of any developments by London. Daladier and Bonnet initially rejected Chamberlain's solution, namely that the Sudetenland be handed to Germany, but were soon brought round.[189] A concession was made. Thus, following the cessation of the Sudetenland to Germany, a guarantee would be given to the remaining Czechoslovakia. On 19 September, British and French representatives advised Edouard Benes, the Czechoslovakian president, that areas containing 50% or more Germans should be ceded to Germany.[190]

Benes, in turn, asked the French and Soviet governments whether they would fulfil their treaty obligations.[191] Benes request for Soviet assistance in particular

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[187] Feiling, *Chamberlain*, p. 357, pp. 366-68; Memorandum on the Conversation between Fuhrer and Mr Neville Chamberlain at the Obersalzberg (Berchtesgaden). 15 Sept, 1938. no. 487. D.G.F.P, D, II; Notes by Mr Chamberlain on his conversation with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden . 15 Sept, 1938. no. 895; Translation of notes made by Herr Schmidt of Mr Chamberlain's conversation with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden. 15 Sept, 1938. D.B.F.P., 3, II.

[188] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 304.

[189] Record of Anglo French conversations held at no. 10 Downing Street . 18 Sept, 1938. no. 928. D.B.F.P., 3, II.

[190] Halifax to Newton. 18 Sept, 1938. no. 927. Ibid.

[191] Newton to Halifax. 19 Sept, 1938. no. 960. D.B.F.P., 3, II; Telegram from the Minister of the USSR (Alexandrovsky) to Czechoslovakia to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. 19 Sept, 1938. no. 36. *New Documents.*

revealed the anxiety felt by the Czech President because he was averse to Soviet troops occupying Czech territory for fear of Communist expansion. Soviet - Czech diplomatic relations had only been improved in 1934-5, but since then, the Czechoslovakian government had faced both domestic as well as international difficulties regarding Soviet-Czech relations. Firstly, there existed domestic opposition to such collaboration. Although left wing parties and the Communists urged closer relations with the Soviet Union, the Agrarian and right wing parties opposed closer relations. Secondly, Benes had to ensure that the German dictator could not accuse Czechoslovakia of being an outpost of Communism. Consequently, when the Czech government signed the mutual assistance treaty with the Soviet Union in 1935, it insisted that the treaty would only come into operation if the French acted first. By the autumn of 1938 relations between Prague and Moscow were not entirely satisfactory. For domestic as well as personal reasons, the Czech president resisted pressing for confirmation of Soviet aid in the event of war. Indeed, no joint military planning had taken place between the two governments.[192] When war appeared to be imminent, however, Benes recognised the necessity of putting aside the ideological suspicion and hostility of many within his country.

On 20 September, Moscow replied to Benes enquiry about Soviet sincerity. The Kremlin repeated its support and rejected the French and British proposal to cede the Sudetenland.[193] Benes, however, conceded to the French and British demands. The Czech president had been warned that if he refused his country would be left to face the Germans alone.[194] On 22 September, the Czech government led by Milan Hadza, resigned. On the same day at Godesberg,

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[192] Robbins, *Munich*, p. 262.

[193] Telegram from the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs to the Soviet Minister to Czechoslovakia. 20 Sept, 1938. Doc. 38. *New Documents*.

[194] Telegram from the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Czechoslovak legations in Great Britain and France. 21 Sept, 1938. no. 42. Ibid; Newton to Halifax. 24 Sept, 1938. no. 42. D.B.F.P., 3, III.

Hitler rejected Chamberlain's proposals as inadequate. The German dictator now wanted the Polish and Hungarian demands for Czech land met.[195] The Polish government had already begun to assemble its forces along the Czechoslovakian border in anticipation of an opportunity to seize Teschen, an area with a large Polish population.[196] On 23 September, Hitler demanded that the occupation of the Sudetenland be speeded up. The occupation would begin on 26 September and would be completed on 28 September up to a line drawn by the German general staff. A plebiscite would then be held in this and additional areas.[197]

Chamberlain rejected Hitler's new demands, as did the Czech government, and Czechoslovakian troops were mobilised.[198] Earlier, on 23 September, R. A. Butler, and the Lord Privy Seal, Lord de la Warr, had sought confirmation of Soviet intentions regarding Czechoslovakia at Geneva. In this first meeting of British and Soviet representatives regarding the Sudetenland crisis, Litvinov reiterated Moscow's dedication to honouring its pact with Prague. Litvinov added that the Kremlin had informed the Polish government that any attack by them on the Teschen area would invalidate the Soviet - Polish non aggression pact and action would be taken by Soviet troops. The Soviet Commissar made another proposal for a meeting of the French, British and Soviet governments, but again Moscow received no reply.[199]

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[195] Notes of a conversation between Chamberlain and Hitler at Godesberg. 22 Sept, 1938. no. 1033. D.B.F.P., 3, II.
[196] Cienciala, 'The Munich Crisis of 1938.'
[197] Memorandum on the Conversation between the Führer and Neville Chamberlain at Godesberg. 23 Sept, 1938. no. 583; Memorandum handed by the Fuhrer to the British Prime Minister. 23 Sept, 1938. no. 584. D.G.F.P., D, II.
[198] Notes from the Czechoslovak Minister to Halifax. 25 Sept, 1938. no. 1092. D.B.F.P., 3, II.
[199] Halifax to United Kingdom Delegation. 23 Sept, 1938. no. 1043; United Kingdom Delegation to Halifax. 24 Sept, 1938. no. 1071. D.B.F.P., 3, II.

On 26 September, Hitler gave his ultimatum.[200] On the same day, the News Department in the British Foreign Office, headed by Reginald Leeper[201] , issued a press communiqué . It stated that

> ...if in spite of all efforts made by the British Prime Minister a German attack is made upon Czechoslovakia the immediate result must be that France will be bound to come to her assistance and Great Britain and Russia will certainly stand by France.[202]

Thus, the Soviet Union was mentioned for the first time in a British communiqué regarding Czechoslovakia. Immediately after its publication, however, a repudiation of the statement was issued.[203] On 27 September, Chamberlain sent a personal message to the Czech president warning him that the West would not provide aid if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia.[204] Afterwards, in reply to a letter from Hitler, Chamberlain urged another meeting to settle the issue. Chamberlain also wrote to the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, expressing his hope that a peaceful solution could be found.[205] Hitler and Mussolini decided to hold a conference at Munich. On 28 September, Chamberlain announced his invitation to the conference and his acceptance, to the House of Commons.[206] At Munich, neither the Czechoslovakian nor Soviet governments were represented. Questions raised by Chamberlain and Daladier were brushed aside. Finally, on 30 September, an agreement not dissimilar to

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[200] Notes of a conversation between Sir Horace Wilson and Hitler at Berlin. 26 Sept, 1938. no. 1118. Ibid.

[201] No papers relevant to this subject or period exist. Evidence of Leeper's views can instead be found in the FO 395 (News Department) series and FO 371 (Foreign Office) series.

[202] Halifax to Henderson. 26 Sept, 1938. no. 1111. D.B.F.P., 3, II.

[203] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 318.

[204] Halifax to Newton. 27 Sept, 1938. no.1136; Halifax to Henderson. 27 Sept, 1938. no. 1140. D.B.F.P., 3, II.

[205] Halifax to Henderson. 28 Sept, 1938. no.1158; Henderson to Halifax. 27 Sept, 1938. no. 1144. D.B.F.P., 3, II; Col. 25. 28 Sept, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.

[206] Col. 26. Ibid.

the demands made by Hitler at Godesberg, was concluded.[207] It stated that the Sudetenland was to be occupied in stages between 1 - 10 October up to a line determined by an international commission, with additional plebiscite areas as necessary.[208] Once claims of the Polish and Hungarian minorities were satisfied then Britain and France would join with Italy and Germany in guaranteeing the remainder of the Czech state. Benes made one more appeal for aid from the Soviet government, but before it could be replied to, he submitted. Later, the Czech president stated that Moscow had in fact promised unilateral assistance in the event of a German invasion of Czechoslovakia.[209] The reply, however, had been too late. Four days after the Munich agreement was concluded, Benes resigned.

Throughout September 1938, Neville Chamberlain remained opposed to any suggestion of collaboration with the Soviet government over the Sudetenland crisis. Having earlier agreed to the Foreign Secretary's plans to try to change the terms of the Soviet - Czechoslovakian pact[210] , the Prime Minister did not hesitate to agree to Hitler's demands to remove Czechoslovakia's obligations to the Soviet Union. He also reproved the Foreign Secretary for his publication of the communiqué regarding Britain's willingness to assist France and the Soviet Union.[211] Twice in September, the Prime Minister named the Soviet Union when discussing a possible guarantee of what remained of Czechoslovakia if the

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[207] Memorandum on the first meeting between the British and French Prime Ministers, the Duce, and the Führer at Munich. 29 Sept, 1938. no. 670; Memorandum by an official of the Foreign Minister's staff (Erich Kordt) on the second meeting between the British and French Prime Ministers, the Duce, and the Führer at Munich. 29 Sept, 1938.no. 674; Agreement signed at Munich between Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy. 29 Sept,1938. no. 675. D.G.F.P., D, II; Thorne, *Approach of War,* p. 86.

[208] In fact, plebiscites were never held.

[209] Bond, *Military Policy,* p. 282.

[210] Letter to Henderson from Halifax. 12 May, 1938. FO 800 / 269 . Henderson Papers; Halifax to Phipps. 17 June, 1938. no. 421. D.B.F.P., 3, I.

[211] Hoare, *Troubled Years,* p. 318.

Sudetenland was ceded.[212] But this in no way reflected a genuine willingness to collaborate with the Soviets. The Prime Minister had no intention of guaranteeing Czechoslovakia, and, indeed, the guarantee was never ratified. Instead, such statements had been made to placate domestic critics. Thus, the Munich agreement was not an expression of Chamberlain not wanting to choose between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.[213] The Prime Minister's decisions during the meetings with Hitler, and indeed his final agreement to the Munich conference, exemplified his attitude towards the Soviet Union. Chamberlain continued to be indifferent to the position of the Soviet government and remained only too eager to see the Soviet Union diplomatically excluded from Europe.

Britain's agreement to the Munich settlement, indeed nearly all of the decisions taken regarding the settlement of the Sudetenland crisis during September were taken by Chamberlain alone. The Prime Minister had, for example, initiated the Munich meeting by contacting Hitler and Mussolini without consulting other members of the Cabinet or even the Foreign Secretary. On 19 September, Chamberlain wrote to his sister: 'On Tuesday night I saw the moment had come and must be taken if I was not to be too late. So I sent the fateful telegram and told the cabinet the next morning what I had done.'[214] On the evening before Chamberlain left for Munich he failed to assemble the Cabinet or even the 'inner cabinet'.[215] Throughout 1938, the entire Cabinet had supported Chamberlain's decisions regarding the rebuttals of Soviet proposals for collaboration over the Czech crisis. Why, then, did he feel he could not discuss the possibility of proposing such a meeting with his Cabinet? One suggestion is

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[212] CAB 23 / 95 Cab. 38 . 14 Sept, 1938; Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 180; CAB 23 / 95 Cab. 41. 21 Sept, 1938.
[213] Robbins, *Munich*, p. 334.
[214] Letter to Ida. 19 Sept, 1938. Chamberlain Papers.
[215] Parker, *Appeasement*, p. 179.

that Chamberlain feared mounting opposition to his determination to reach an accord with Hitler. Another suggestion, however, is that the Prime Minister recognised that some members of his Cabinet were rethinking their position regarding the inclusion of the Soviet Union. To support this interpretation one can first point to Chamberlain deliberately misleading his Cabinet regarding the opinions of the opposition towards Soviet involvement in settling the Czech crisis. Thus, on 19 September, the Prime Minister decided to give his colleagues an account of the conversation he had had with the Labour deputation, consisting of Herbert Morrison , Hugh Dalton, and Walter Citrine, two days earlier. After telling the deputation that Georges Bonnet had 'grave doubts as to whether the Soviet Union really meant to do anything'[216] , Chamberlain told his Cabinet that the Labour deputation had expressed their regret at calling for collaboration with Moscow and their criticisms of government policy over the Sudetenland.[217] Yet Chamberlain's account of the meeting was in stark contrast to the recollections of Hugh Dalton. Dalton recorded in his diary on 17 September 1938, that he (Dalton) did not agree with Bonnet's accusations of insincerity on Moscow's part and therefore continued to support Anglo-French-Soviet cooperation regarding the defence of the Sudetenland.[218]

Further evidence that ministers were changing their opinions about collaborating with the Soviets over Czechoslovakia can be revealed in an examination of the statements and decisions made by Cabinet ministers themselves during September. Throughout most of 1938, indeed for the first three weeks of September, Cabinet ministers had supported Chamberlain's diplomatic exclusion of the Soviets. Early in March, for example, Halifax, had suggested that the French be persuaded to support the British in its attempt to

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[216] Diary entry. 17 Sept, 1938. 1 / 19 / 27. Dalton Papers.
[217] CAB 23 / 95 Cab. 40 . 19 Sept, 1938.
[218] Diary entry. 17 Sept, 1938. 1 / 19 / 27. Dalton Papers.

'isolate Russia."[219] In May, it had been Halifax that led the proposal to change the terms of the Soviet - Czech pact of assistance.[220] He refused to keep the Soviet ambassador informed of developments regarding Czechoslovakia,[221] and in September put forward a number of inadequate excuses as to why the Soviet proposal of cooperation could not be accepted.[222] He told Winston Churchill, for example, that in order to achieve an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance ' it would be necessary to draw up a formal instrument in Treaty form, and this would be a long and complicated matter."[223] Of course, the amount of time it would in fact take to establish collaboration depended entirely on those countries involved, and would only be a long and complicated matter if certain governments wished it to be.

Despite such opposition to collaboration, however, during the final week of September several ministers appeared to change their minds.[224] Halifax, in particular, made two significant decisions between 23 - 29 September. The first, was to send R. A. Butler and Lord de la Warr to Geneva to discover Soviet intentions regarding the defence of Czechoslovakia. Though the Foreign Secretary's decision revealed an arrogant presumption that, after months of exclusion, Moscow would still confide and cooperate with London, Halifax had, nevertheless, taken the step to at least enquire about Soviet intentions. His second revealing decision was to ratify the foreign office communiqué released on 26 September, which stated Britain's willingness to assist both France and

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[219] CAB 27 / 623 24 mtg. 1 Mar, 1938.
[220] Henderson Papers. Letter to Henderson from Halifax. 12 May, 1938. FO 800 / 269; Halifax to Phipps. 17 June, 1938. no. 421. D.B.F.P., 3, I. Halifax never explained how exactly he intended to enforce such changes in the mutual assistance pacts of France, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.
[221] Halifax to Chilston. 8 Sept, 1938. no. 808. D.B.F.P., 3, II.
[222] CAB 27 / 623 25.mtg 15 Mar, 1938.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Gilbert and Gott, *Appeasers*, p. 154.

the Soviet Union if necessary.[225]

Halifax was not alone in his change of attitude towards cooperating with the Soviets. Samuel Hoare also considered the Soviet Union when thinking about possible settlements of the crisis. In his memoirs written after the war, Hoare depicted himself as being very much opposed to any form of Anglo-Soviet collaboration and this was largely true for much of his political career up to September 1938. Yet, in a letter to the Foreign Secretary on 15 September, Hoare suggested the neutralisation of Czechoslovakia 'under guarantee of principal European powers', including Germany and the Soviet Union. The reason for this, he explained, was that the Czechs would never surrender their alliances with the French and Soviets, as Hitler demanded, because such alliances were their 'only hope of security.'[226] Not only, then, did Hoare believe the Soviet government could be involved in the settling of the Sudetenland crisis, but he even went on to explain how this would benefit Moscow; '...to the Russians', he wrote, 'a large neutralised area between themselves and the Germans would be an advantage strategically, and they would be freed from any obligation to intervene in a war such as may now be impending.'[227]

Following this, on 25 September, the Home Secretary told the Cabinet that he 'thought it was of utmost importance that the countries involved', namely, Britain, the Soviet Union and France, 'should examine the military position as

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[225] Hoare states in his memoirs that, in fact, the communiqué had never been authorised and this is why the Cabinet sent out an immediate repudiation. However, in addition to the general unreliability of Hoare's memoirs, William Strang points out in his memoirs that a statement on p. 550 in Documents of British Foreign Policy, series 3, volume 2, reveals that the communiqué was authorised by Halifax on the afternoon of the 26 September. A number of historians have accepted this version of events. See, Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 318; Strang, *Home and Abroad*, p. 133; Parker, *Appeasement*, p. 175.

[226] Letter to Halifax from Hoare. 15 Sept, 1938. FO 800 / 309 . Halifax Papers. Public Record Office.

[227] Ibid.

impartially as possible.'[228] Thus, for the first time, a Cabinet minister considered the views and perspective of the Soviet government. In addition, Hoare appeared to acknowledge the influence of prejudices upon foreign policy decisions and suggested that such feelings be put aside. Halifax's and Hoare's change of attitude towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration was mirrored by others including de la Warr and the Secretary of State for Air, Kingsley Wood. Both had accepted the diplomatic exclusion of the Soviet Union throughout 1938, yet, on 2 September, de la Warr had written to the Foreign Secretary to suggest that the Foreign Office make a demonstration of consulting with the Soviet and French ambassadors in London. Such a step, he explained, 'would do good with the Russians whose help after all we may need in the last resort. I gather from Harold Nicolson who saw Maisky the other day that there is a certain amount of feeling about being left out in the cold...'[229] Despite earlier commenting upon the weaknesses of the Soviet airforce[230] , Kingsley Wood suggested to the cabinet on 25 September, 'that inter-staff talks should take place between the Chief of Imperial General Staff and the Chief of the French General Staff.' Wood added, '...if possible the Russians might be associated with these talks.'[231] Indeed, records show that during this meeting, the ' Home Secretary's proposal for joint conversations between Britain, France and Russia in order that the cabinet might be in possession of the best military information and advice met with support' from almost all members.[232]

For certain ministers such as Wood and de la Warr, lack of evidence makes it difficult to conclude with any certainty that it was their ideological prejudices that had influenced their attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration

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[228] CAB 23 / 95 Cab. 43. 25 Sept, 1938.
[229] Letter from de la Warr to Halifax. 2 Sept, 1938. FO 800 / 314 . Halifax Papers.The suggestion was repeated on the 10 September, 1938.
[230] CAB 23 / 95 Cab. 43 . 25 Sept, 1938.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.

throughout 1938, and therefore that it was a decision to put aside such prejudices in September that caused them to change their minds regarding collaboration. However, it is fair to assume this interpretation applies equally to these ministers as to others, such as Hoare and Halifax. The assumption can be made for two reasons. Firstly, although certain ministers wrote little about their personal views of the Soviet Union during the 1930s, the similarity, in content, intensity and reasoning amongst those who did note their opinions, suggests that such attitudes were almost inherent and most probably shared by a majority of the political elite. Secondly, that such ministers, especially Kingsley Wood, changed his opinion on an issue which he had put forward throughout 1938 as a primary reason to oppose Anglo-Soviet collaboration, namely Soviet military weakness, suggests that it had only ever been put forward as a convenient excuse to mask more personal reasons.

Cabinet ministers were not the only ones to alter their perception of Soviet capabilities in the event of war. The Chiefs of Staff also changed their minds regarding Soviet military capability and intentions regarding the defence of Czechoslovakia. They did not believe that Moscow would unconditionally defend its ally and in doing so undoubtedly defeat the German forces. However, by August, the Chiefs of Staff did acknowledge that even if the Soviet government remained neutral in war, 'there seems every possibility that she might give *valuable*[233] assistance to Czechoslovakia in the form of warlike stores and 'volunteers', notably pilots flying Russian aircraft.' The report added that this 'tendency of exploiting the "volunteer" system of support may help Czechoslovakia and enable her to sustain her defence against German aggression.'[234] The Soviet government had already provided aid both to the

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[233] My italics.

[234] CAB 53 / 40 C. O. S. 755. 5 Aug, 1938. Conclusions from the 24th meeting of C. O. S. held on 25 July, 1938.

Chinese in the Sino-Japanese war and the Republicans in the Spanish civil war.[235] Thus, in contrast to earlier reports, the Chiefs of Staff now depicted Soviet involvement in war over Czechoslovakia as likely and valuable.

Why had the Chiefs of Staff changed their perceptions of Soviet capabilities and intentions, and why, more significantly, did several Cabinet ministers change their minds, albeit temporarily, with regard to Anglo-Soviet collaboration? Because each decided to put aside their personal prejudices towards the Soviet Union during the foreign policy decision making process. What had persuaded these individuals to put aside their distrust and hostility? One suggestion was that ministers finally listened to the demands of those outside the government. In the House of Commons, numerous politicians from both Labour and Conservative parties had called for cooperation with the Soviets during 1938.[236] Winston Churchill, in particular, had also written privately to Halifax in July suggesting a possibly peaceful solution to the crisis that would also include, and so placate, the Soviet government. He wrote:

> ...it seems to me there are two things which might be done this week to increase the deterrents against violent action by H., [Hitler] neither of which would commit you to the dread guarantee. First would it not be possible to frame a joint note between Britain, France and Russia stating (a) their desire for peace and friendly relations; (b) their deep anxiety at the military preparations of Germany; (c) their joint interest in a peaceful solution of the Czechoslovak controversy, and (d) that an invasion by Germany of Czechoslovakia would raise capital issues for all three powers...It seems to me that this process would give the best chance to the peaceful elements in German official circles to make a stand and that H. [Hitler] might find a way out for himself...The important thing is the joint note.[237]

What evidence seems primarily to indicate, however, is that ministers were

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[235] Ibid.
[236] *Chapter 4.*
[237] Letter to Halifax from Churchill. 31 Aug, 1938. FO 800 / 314 . Halifax Papers.

influenced by their changing perceptions of Hitler. During the first year of Chamberlain's premiership ministers such as Halifax and Hoare especially had noted their suspicions of the German dictator. At the same time, however, they and the rest of the Cabinet had shared Chamberlain's confidence that Hitler's aims were limited and an agreement possible.[238] It was only during the summer of 1938 that this belief began to change. Halifax especially had been receiving intelligence reports from Vansittart since July warning of Hitler's future aggressive ambitions.[239] Events during September appeared to confirm these reports. The Cabinet believed that negotiations with Hitler had broken down, or were likely to collapse, and that war was now inevitable.[240] Ministers had opposed Hitler's Godesberg terms and all were left in London when Chamberlain flew to meet Hitler for the final meeting in Munich. No one knew what news the Prime Minister would bring back. Thus, until 30 September, a bigger fear loomed, something seemingly more threatening than the Soviet Union and Communist expansion.

Neither the Chiefs of Staff nor members of the Cabinet were yet willing to advocate a full Anglo-French-Soviet military alliance. This exemplified the strength of the suspicion that existed towards Moscow. It took great effort on the part of ministers to overlook their distrust of the Soviet government, especially when Soviet decisions continued to fuel such suspicions. Moscow's warning to Poland against the seizure of Teschen, for example, had only seemed to confirm suspicions that the Soviet Union wanted to exploit the crisis in Czechoslovakia to expand eastwards. Consequently, ministers such as Hoare, despite his consideration of cooperation, clarified his position by adding that 'in

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[238] Gorden Martel, ed., 'The Times and Appeasement. The Journals of A. L. Kennedy, 1932-1939, *Camden Fifth Series*, Vol. XVI,(Cambridge, 2000), p. 272; Cowling, *Hitler*, p. p; p. 394; Middlemas, *Diplomacy*, pp. 1- 2; p. 43.

[239] Ferris, 'Vansittart', pp. 164-5.

[240] Letter to Halifax from Hoare. 15 Sept, 1938. FO 800 / 309. Halifax Papers.

any event the Russian attitude need not be a conclusive factor with Britain and France.'[241] Though distrust had been overlooked to the extent that ministers were willing to consider cooperation, attitudes towards the Soviet Union had not changed. Distrust and hostility remained. Certain members of the Cabinet, most notably, Simon and Chamberlain, were not even willing to consider collaboration with the Soviet government.[242]

Was Chamberlain, indeed the entire British Cabinet and Chiefs of Staff, right to distrust the Soviet government in 1938? Several historians since have argued that the Prime Minister and his cabinet were correct in their suspicion of Soviet intentions. Most recently, for example, Igor Lukes, in his article, 'Stalin and Czechoslovakia, 1938 - 1939; An Autopsy of a Myth', asserts that the Soviet Union had no intention of assisting Czechoslovakia in resisting German aggression in 1938.[243] Moscow, Lukes insists, was never really dedicated to the promotion of peace, but instead urged the Czechoslovakian government to resist German demands only due to its desire for conflict between Franco-British capitalism and German - Nazism.[244] Moscow deemed future war desirable because 'Hitler's offensive could be but a prelude to a wave of Socialist revolutions in Europe.'[245] Lukes' article reiterates many of the suspicions voiced by ministers at the time, yet it is no more convincing. The reason for this is that Lukes' argument is based primarily on Czechoslovakian archives and the recollections of the Czech president Benes. This is despite the fact that, as Lukes admits himself, Benes was extremely suspicious of, and felt great hostility

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[241] Ibid; CAB 23 / 95 Cab. 43 . 25 Sept, 1938.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Igor Lukes, 'Stalin and Czechoslovakia, 1938-1939; An Autopsy of a Myth?', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. X, (1999), p. 13.
[244] Ibid, pp. 13-45; Lukes evidence of the Soviet wish to provoke war between the West and Germany is only cited on pp. 37-41. In addition, Lukes himself points out the possibility of such declarations being examples of Soviet propaganda - demonstrating their hostility towards the Western powers.
[245] Ibid, p. 38.

towards, the Soviet government. The reliability of such evidence therefore is highly questionable. Lukes' emphasis upon the practical difficulties inherent in any Soviet assistance of Czechoslovakian are valid. However, such difficulties are irrelevant to the question of Soviet willingness to act.[246]

In contrast to the accusations put forward by ministers in 1938 and historians thereafter, there is much evidence to suggest the Soviet government had every intention of assisting Czechoslovakia. Geoffrey Roberts in his book, The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War, argues convincingly that,

> ...from the beginning to the end of the crisis the Soviets campaigned for international resistance to Hitler's designs on Czechoslovakia, urged the Czechs to stand firm, made it crystal clear that they would fulfil their mutual assistance obligations and agitated for France to do the same.[247]

Moscow hedged on the question of providing assistance come what may, but such behaviour was not, as ministers and historians have suggested, indicative of the Kremlin's efforts to escape its treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia. Instead, it reflected two thoughts within Moscow; first a strong conviction that a collective front by Britain, France and the Soviet Union would deter Hitler from war, and second, a suspicion that both London and Paris were encouraging German expansionism eastwards. Moscow did not want to be left to fight the Germans alone while the British and French stood by. Thus, it is accurate to say that the Soviet government was reluctant to go to war and to point out that Moscow did not make a unilateral declaration of aid come what may. However, as Roberts' research has shown, this does not provide adequate evidence to support the contention that the Soviet Union would not have acted to defend its ally alongside Britain and France.[248]

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[246] Lukes, 'Stalin and Czechoslovakia', pp. 13-48.
[247] Roberts, *Soviet Union*, p. 49.
[248] Ibid, pp. 49-50.

Because of the Munich settlement it will remain difficult to conclude for certain what Stalin's genuine intentions were regarding Czechoslovakia. However, it is revealing that neither Chamberlain nor his ministers chose to deliberate points such as Soviet suspicion of the West and the equity of their proposals. Only twice in the first nine months of 1938 were Soviet suspicions of the West even mentioned. It was certainly never acknowledged that the demands being placed upon the Soviet government were unfair. Indeed, no other government, including the French, which also had a treaty of assistance with Czechoslovakia, was expected to make a unilateral declaration of assistance. This reflected the arrogance and presumption of many within the Cabinet. Even when the Soviet government made quite clear its intention to fulfil its obligations according to the treaty signed with Czechoslovakia in 1935, this did not satisfy British officials. R. A. Butler, wrote after his meeting with Litvinov on 23 September, that he 'was left in no doubt that the Russians themselves did not mean business.' 'Litvinov', he added, 'had been deliberately evasive and vague except when he said that if France acted the Soviet would act too.'[249] The reason Litvinov's wholly unambiguous answer did not satisfy Butler was because nothing the Soviets said or did would be enough for those who were intent on opposing collaboration for other reasons. Only two weeks earlier Litvinov had informed Bonnet, 'that he would like to get the Czech question discussed by an ad hoc committee', involving Soviet and Czech representatives. Butler wrote to Halifax in response; 'Let us hope no more will come of this idea.'[250] British demands for greater demonstrations of sincerity by Moscow were made in anticipation of a Soviet refusal. For those who opposed Anglo - French - Soviet collaboration, such as Butler and Chamberlain, it remained convenient to allow Soviet hedging to be perceived as a reflection of Soviet insincerity.

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[249] In his memoirs, Butler denied the British government deliberately attempted to exclude the Soviet Union from the settlement of the Sudetenland crisis. However, as Butler's correspondence and the developments of 1938 show, Butler's account was not accurate. See, Butler, *Art of Possible,* p. 70; p. 71.

[250] Butler to Halifax. 11 Sept, 1938. no. 835. D.B.F.P., 3, II.

Ultimately, all within the Cabinet, with the exception of Duff Cooper, accepted the agreement Chamberlain signed and brought back from Munich. The Prime Minister had apparently averted war. He claimed to have achieved not only 'peace with honour' but also 'peace in our time.' Hence, there no longer existed any urgent reason for ministers to continue overlooking their suspicion of the Soviet Union. One who did not agree with the settlement reached at Munich, however, was the First Lord of the Admiralty, Duff Cooper. His perception of Hitler at the time of Munich differed from others, and he consequently opposed Chamberlain's appeasement policies.[251] Cooper said little about the Soviet Union during his time in government and his memoirs, Old Men Forget, provides little more insight into his views of the Soviet government and Communism.[252] In 1938, however, the First Lord of the Admiralty did want the Soviet Union involved in plans to resist future German aggression. Indeed, Cooper was the only member of the cabinet to favour a bluff, involving the Soviet Union, against Hitler. He thought that if Hitler was made to believe he would face the old alliance of 1914 - 1918, together with American support, the German dictator would back down and war would be averted.[253] Evidently, then, the First Lord believed the Soviet Union to be militarily strong enough to deter Hitler from war. His greater recognition of the German threat had convinced Cooper, for much longer and to a greater extent than other ministers, of the need to exclude political and ideological considerations in the foreign policy decision making process. 'If in the face of the real and terrible German danger all our efforts are to be analysed by the ... bolshevist bogey', he wrote, '... I feel inclined to despair.'[254] His greater recognition of Hitler's aggressive foreign policy

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[251] John Charmley, *Duff Cooper. The Authorised Biography,* (London, 1986), pp. 126-8.
[252] Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, (London, 1953).
[253] Letter by Duff Cooper 8 Aug, 1938. FO 800 / 309 H/1/1. Cited in Charmley, *Duff Cooper*, p. 114.
[254] Letter to Phipps from Cooper. 7 Dec, 1938. PHPPS 3/2. Phipps Papers.

ambitions, however, also led Cooper to resign at the end of September[255] rather than accept the Munich agreement.

Cooper's resignation did not greatly concern the Prime Minister. He remained hopeful that an accord with Hitler was still possible. During the winter of 1938 - 1939, London put out unofficial feelers involving a colonial settlement, private visits to Hitler, and even the possibility of a defensive alliance against the Soviet Union.[256] Anglo-German relations, however, were to deteriorate. On 10 November, in what has since become known as 'Crystal Night', the Jews of Germany were attacked in response to the murder of a German diplomat by a Polish Jew in Paris. Hitler announced that he no longer valued British friendship and in December, Berlin declared that there would be an increase in the German submarine fleet equivalent to that of the British fleet. This represented a clear breach of the Anglo-German naval agreement signed in 1935.[257] As relations worsened, London looked for an improvement of relations with Italy. In January, Chamberlain and Halifax visited Rome to meet the Italian dictator. But Mussolini had already accepted Hitler's proposals for turning the anti-Comintern pact signed in November 1937 into a military alliance.[258] In the same month, Hitler ordered the Czechoslovakian government to pull out of the League of Nations. Promises made at the end of September

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[255] Charmley, *Duff Cooper,* pp. 126-8.

[256] The ambassador in Great Britain to the Foreign Ministry. Political report. Signed V. Dirksen. 31 Oct, 1938. no. 260; Unsigned memoranda. Conversation between Herr Wienke (Reichsbank) and Mr F. T. Ashton Gwatkin. 6 Nov, 1938. no. 262; Memorandum by the director of the economic policy department. Subject: Conversation with Mr Ashton Gwatkin. Signed Wiehl. 20 Feb, 1939. no. 316; Memorandum by an official of the Foreign Minister's personal staff. Subject: Conversation between the Foreign Minister and Ashton Gwatkin, head of the economic department in the Foreign Office. Signed Hewel. 20 Feb, 1939. no. 317; Minute by the director of the economic policy department. Signed Wiehl. 25 Feb, 1939. no. 323. D.G.F.P., D, IV.

[257] Thorne, *Approach of War,* pp. 95-96; Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes to Halifax. 18 Nov, 1938. no. 315. D.B.F.P., 3, III; N. H. Baynes ed., *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler,* Vol. II, (London, 1942), pp. 1534-6; pp. 1544-8; pp. 1555-7. Cited in Parker *Appeasement,* p. 186.

[258] Ciano's Diary entry 1 January, 1939. Andreas Mayor trans. and Malcolm Muggeridge, *Ciano's Diary, 1937 - 1938,* (London, 1952); Renzo de Felice ed., *Galeazzo Ciano, Diario, 1937-43,* [Milan, 1980].

1938 to guarantee what remained of Czechoslovakia had not materialised.[259] Indeed, at the end of February, the German dictator made it clear that he had no intention of participating in any guarantee of Czechoslovakia.[260]

Despite the apparent aversion of war achieved by Munich, the agreement had only highlighted the exclusion of the Soviet Union from international affairs.[261] In Moscow, Molotov argued that the settlement typified the political prejudices of the West. 'The real point', he declared on 6 November, 'is that...the "democratic" states, although they deplore the "excesses" of the Fascist states... have a still greater fear of the working class movement...and think that Fascism is a good antidote.'[262] His accusation was not wholly inaccurate. There is little evidence to show that, as Ivan Maisky later suggested, the British actually encouraged Hitler eastwards.[263] However Chamberlain was entirely indifferent to the possibility of a German attack on the Soviet Union. After having been told by British intelligence that Hitler's aim at the end of 1938 was to devote 'special attention to the eastward drive, to securing control of the exploitable riches of south and possibly more of, Russia...'[264] , Chamberlain informed the Cabinet that 'if there were any truth in these rumours', the main concern of London was to avoid being dragged into any 'quarrel between Russia and Germany.'[265]

By signing the Munich agreement, Moscow believed the British and French had failed to take the last opportunity to halt Hitler's aggressive foreign policy. Consequently, Soviet hope for collective security would now become

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[259] The British government, after pressure from the House of Commons, had announced on 4 October, 'a moral obligation to Czechoslovakia to treat the guarantee as now being in force.' Col. 304. 4 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[260] Note verbale to the French embassy. 28 Feb, 1939. no. 175. D.G.F.P., D, IV.
[261] Watt, *How War Came,* p. 113.
[262] Jane Degras ed., *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, 1917-1941,* Vol. III, (London, 1953), p. 308. Cited in Thorne, *Approach of War,* p. 136.
[263] Ivan Maisky, *Who Helped Hitler,* (London,1964), pp. 77-91.
[264] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries,* pp. 130-131.
[265] CAB 23/96 Cab. 56.22 Nov, 1938; CAB 24 / 280 C.P. 258.

subordinated to a policy of collective defence.[266] Between October 1938 - March 1939, Moscow reverted to a policy of isolationism. In November, Soviet troops and aid were withdrawn from Spain.[267] Dissatisfaction with the actions of the Western powers continued to be voiced. In February, for example, Litvinov told the new British ambassador in Moscow, William Seeds, that the Soviet government and public opinion saw no sign that Britain and France would do anything but continue to capitulate. 'Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini', Litvinov explained, 'are as frightened of war as you are but they now know from experience that you will never fight.' The Soviet Union, therefore, would 'keep aloof', especially since its interests were not directly threatened.[268] Stalin, himself, expressed his resentment at the decisions taken by the British and French. On 10 March, 1939, at the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Stalin accused the western powers of abandoning and so destroying the principle of collective security. The Soviet Union, he warned, would no longer be a mercenary for others.[269]

Almost no diplomatic activity took place between London and Moscow until January 1939 when William Seeds replaced the British ambassador in Moscow, Viscount Chilston. It seemed a new opportunity for improved relations. Though equally appalled by the Soviet internal system, Seeds had lived in Russia, spoke Russian and was an advocate of closer Anglo-French-Soviet relations.[270] His instruction was to emphasise London's goodwill towards Moscow, which he did.[271] During the same month, the Foreign Office received rumours for the first time of German - Soviet negotiations. The talks caused uneasiness, but they

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[266] Roberts, *The Soviet Union*, pp. 60-61.
[267] Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, pp. 851-2.
[268] Seeds to Halifax. 19 Feb, 1939. no. 121. D.B.F.P.,3, IV,
[269] Seeds to Halifax, 20 Mar, 1939. no. 93. Ibid.
[270] *Chapter 3.*
[271] Seeds to Halifax. 26 Jan, 1939. no. 24; Seeds to Halifax. 28 Jan, 1939. no. 46. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.

were largely dismissed as mistaken, deriving from what was actually German - Soviet economic talks.[272] Further steps were taken to foster improved Anglo-Soviet relations in February, when Robert Hudson, Head of the Department of Overseas Trade, was sent to Moscow to negotiate the possibility of a new trade agreement with the Soviet government.[273] Negotiations in March, however, were soon overshadowed by the consequences of what was occurring in central eastern Europe, namely, the disappearance of what remained of Czechoslovakia between 13 - 15 March.

After the Munich agreement, several Cabinet ministers spoke out in favour of improving Anglo - Soviet relations. The Foreign Secretary, in particular, made an effort to ease tension between the two countries.[274] Thus, he took the time to explain the exclusion of the Soviet Union from the Munich conference. Halifax had never before shown any concern for the reaction of Moscow, yet on 29 September he told Maisky that he 'was particularly anxious that his government should not misinterpret the fact that this conference did not include a representative of the Soviet government.'[275] The Foreign Secretary's willingness to conciliate the Soviet government was even more evident in a letter he wrote to the British ambassador in Moscow:

> I assured the Ambassador [Maisky] that there was no desire on our part to see the Soviet Government, whose interest in these great issues was as large as our own, in any way excluded from them, and the fact that in present circumstances it might be impossible, if we were to talk to the German and Italian Governments at all, to include the Soviet government directly in these talks, in no way signified any weakening of a desire on our part, any more, no doubt, than on that of the French Government, to preserve our understandings and relations with the

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[272] Ibid; D. Cameron Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', *International Security,* Vol. IV, (1989). For further details see, *Chapters 3 and 7.*
[273] Watt, *How War Came,* pp. 219 - 221.
[274] Ibid, p. 83.
[275] Halifax to Chilston. 29 Sept,1938. no. 1221. D. B. F. P., 3, II.

Soviet Government.[276]

Initially, Halifax had been cautious. He acknowledged in the House of Lords that the exclusion of the Soviet Union to date would have caused much resentment; 'Russia herself has never been consulted, and we do not know what her attitude would be.'[277] After his conversation with Maisky, however, Halifax seemed hopeful that progress would be made. He told Chilston that Maisky's,

> ... general attitude seemed to me, as, indeed, it was likely to be, one of some suspicion, but not one of resentment in face of facts, which he was perforce obliged to admit. And, as our conversation proceeded, he seemed to discard some of the suspicion.[278]

The Foreign Secretary, in fact, could not have been more wrong about the resentment and suspicion harboured by the Kremlin. Nevertheless, he continued to try and establish a closer relationship with Moscow. Most significantly, he took the opportunity of improving relations through a revision of the 1934 trade agreement. The initial demand for a revision of the trade agreement had stemmed from the complaints of UK traders regarding Moscow's unfair trading.[279] Oliver Stanley, President of the Board of the Trade, informed the Cabinet of the complaints at the end of 1938. Stanley, himself a supporter of improving Anglo-Soviet relations, did not want to antagonise the Soviet government and suggested negotiations be carried out at a later date .[280] Thus, in February, Halifax took up the initiative and told the Cabinet that he 'did not wish to lose any opportunity of establishing closer relations with Russia.'[281] He spoke of 'warming up to Russia and sending a minister there.'[282] Robert Hudson was sent to negotiate the possibility of a new economic

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[276] Ibid.
[277] CAB 24 / 280 C.P. 258. Speech given in the House of Lords. Undated.
[278] Halifax to Chilston. 29 Sept,1938. no. 1221. D. B. F. P., 3, II.
[279] Their complaints were based on what they perceived to be the inequity of British imports of Soviets goods, compared to Soviet imports of British goods.
[280] CAB 24 / 283 C.P. 32 .
[281] CAB 23 / 97 Cab. 6. 8 Feb, 1939; Watt, *How War Came,* pp. 219-221.
[282] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 255.

relationship between Britain and the Soviet Union. Soon after, Alexander Cadogan also appeared to at least ponder the prospect of further collaboration.[283]

Both Samuel Hoare and Sir John Simon also made statements following Munich declaring a willingness on the part of the British government not to exclude the Soviet government from international politics. On 5 October, Simon informed the House of Commons that it was the government's 'hope that Russia will be willing to join in the guarantee of Czechoslovakia', and that the government had 'no intention whatever of excluding Russia...from any future settlements in Europe.'[284] Hoare reiterated the point, stating the government did 'not in anyway contemplate the exclusion of Soviet Russia.'[285] Throughout 1938, Simon had said almost nothing about the Soviet Union, and what few remarks he made were negative. Consequently, it is most likely that his statement in the House of Commons was intended only to calm critics and did not reflect his personal attitudes towards the Soviet Union or future Anglo-Soviet relations. Samuel Hoare, on the other hand, had considered collaboration with Moscow at the height of the Czechoslovakian crisis and continued to call for closer relations in Cabinet meetings after Munich. The Home Secretary was genuinely in favour of including the Soviet Union in any guarantee of Czechoslovakia, and on 16 November proposed that the Foreign Office 'might suggest to the French government that they, in their turn, should sound the Soviet government as to their attitude.'[286] When it appeared that Chamberlain was going to acquiesce in the exclusion of the Soviet Union in favour of a four power agreement including Germany, Italy, France and Britain, Hoare spoke out.

> The proposal was some way removed from the earlier proposal that France, Russia and this country should give a joint guarantee to

[283] Minute by Sir A. Cadogan. 1 Mar, 1939. FO 371 / 23697 .
[284] Ian Colvin, *Vansittart in Office* , (London, 1965), p. 277.
[285] Ibid.
[286] CAB 23 / 96 Cab. 55. 16 Nov, 1938.

> Czechoslovakia and that Germany and Italy should sign separate non-aggression pacts with Czechoslovakia', he pointed out. [287]

As well as supporting closer Anglo-Soviet relations in official meetings, the Home Secretary's private papers also show what appears to be an effort on the part of Hoare to improve relations between himself and the Soviet ambassador, Maisky.[288]

Such support and effort to improve relations between Moscow and London reflected the continued struggle of certain ministers to put aside their personal prejudices against the Soviet Union. The reason for this was an increasing realisation of the potential influence the Soviet Union could have upon international affairs in the future. Thus, Halifax told the British ambassador in Paris, that the Soviet Union 'for good or evil, is part of Europe and we cannot ignore her existence.'[289] Samuel Hoare urged the Cabinet that it was in Britain's 'interest to see a strong Russia, and that we must not take any action which made it appear that we were anti-Russian, or indifferent to Russia's future.'[290] Moscow's potential importance was being increasingly realised for two reasons. The first, as mentioned above, was changing perceptions of Hitler. Those that called for improved Anglo-Soviet relations were also those who had begun to realise Hitler's aggressive foreign policy ambitions. Not only had the German dictator threatened war over Czechoslovakia, but during the winter of 1938 - 1939, the Foreign Office received rumours that Germany intended to attack westwards, and not eastwards as had been thought.[291] Another concern, however, were the rumours of a possible German - Soviet rapprochement which the Foreign Office began to receive in January. Maxim Litvinov had informed the Foreign Office that a German delegation would soon arrive in

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[287] Ibid. Cab. 57. 30 Nov, 1938.
[288] A letter from Maisky to Hoare. Part X. File 3. Lord Templewood Papers.
[289] Halifax to Phipps. 1. Nov, 1938. no. 285. D.B.F.P., 3, III.
[290] CAB 23 / 96 Cab. 56. 22 Nov, 1938.
[291] John Charmley, *Lord Lloyd and the Decline of the British Empire*, (New York, 1987), p. 222.

Moscow. A member of the German embassy said privately that they would be buying raw materials and supplying machinery, and, perhaps, arms.[292] In February, Charles Corbin, the French ambassador in London, emphasised to Alexander Cadogan that Hitler's recent speeches had contained no attack on the Soviets.[293] Cadogan noted his concern;

> If we may believe that the Germans have found that their project for acquiring a dominating position in the Ukraine was not so realisable as they had thought, it may well be that they have turned their minds to obtaining a form of economic cooperation with, if not domination of, the Soviet with a view to benefiting from the almost unlimited sources of raw materials which that might put at their disposal. The transformation of the anti-Comintern pact into a simple act of mutual assistance against unprovoked aggression by any third party might be designed by the Germans to convince the Soviet Government that they are no longer their chief enemy and that German policy is not directed entirely against the Soviet and all its works. It seems to me that we shall have to watch very carefully the development of any tendency towards a *rapprochement* between Germany and the Soviet.[294]

It is interesting to note that Cadogan's fear of a German - Soviet rapprochement had persuaded him to recognise the value of the Soviet Union. The Foreign Secretary's Private Secretary, Oliver Harvey, also recalled in his diary his own anxiety at such rumours of a possible German - Soviet rapprochement.[295] It is not purely coincidental that it was at this time that the Foreign Secretary decided to initiate plans to negotiate a new trade agreement.

Though these ministers supported improved Anglo-Soviet relations, the Soviet Union had not yet become a primary consideration in the foreign policy decision making process. No Cabinet member supported an Anglo-Soviet

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[292] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, pp. 250-251.
[293] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, p. 146.
[294] Minute by Sir A. Cadogan. 1 Feb, 1939. no. 76. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[295] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, pp. 250-251.

alliance, because personal attitudes towards the Soviet Union had neither changed nor been put aside completely. Several ministers had made an effort to overlook their distrust of Moscow, but there was no guarantee that these efforts to keep aside such opinions would persist. It remained difficult for ministers to embrace a government they had suspected for so long. Hence, it is not surprising that ministers and officials made contradictory statements and decisions. Halifax, for example, despite his rhetoric and calls for Soviet involvement in international politics immediately after the signing of the Munich agreement, later agreed to and justified Moscow's exclusion from a guarantee of Czechoslovakia.[296] He told the Foreign Policy Committee:

> The question arises whether or not the Czech government should ask or accept a guarantee from Russia. His Majesty's Government consider that, if Russia is brought in as guarantor, it is probable that Germany and Italy will refuse to join in the guarantee since the guarantee of Germany is essential, we should if matter came to one of clear choice between Germany and Russia, prefer the former of the price of the exclusion of the latter....[297]

Nevertheless, Halifax did at least try to improve Anglo-Soviet relations during the months following Munich.

Chamberlain on the other hand had not changed his hope of appeasing Hitler. As a result there remained no reason for the Prime Minister to even attempt to overlook his own hostility towards and suspicion of the Soviet government, nor revise his opposition to closer Anglo-Soviet relations. In a statement in which Chamberlain explained to the House of Commons his hopes for the future and his foreign policy plans, the Prime Minister failed to even mention the Soviet Union. Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour party , exclaimed that the 'Prime Minister cannot even bear to mention them [the Soviet Union].'[298] Following the events of September, Chamberlain was aware that he had to be careful not to

[296] CAB 24 / 280 C.P. 258.
[297] CAB 27 / 627 69 mtg. 1 Dec,1938.
[298] Col. 58. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.

accentuate the potential for dissent amongst several ministers, so he did not openly oppose suggestions to improve relations with the Soviet Union and even agreed to Halifax's proposal to initiate negotiations regarding a revision of the trade agreement of 1934.[299] At the same time, however, Chamberlain continued to oppose Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration by putting forward the difficulties he perceived to be inherent in closer Anglo-Soviet relations. Furthermore his only comments regarding the Soviet Union were negative. When Hoare, for example, suggested that the British government should make an effort not to appear hostile towards the Soviet Union, Chamberlain added; 'at the same time, it was desirable to avoid entanglement arising out of a possible dispute between Russia and Germany.'[300] During deliberations concerning trade negotiations with Moscow, the Prime Minister repeatedly highlighted the problems he believed would occur within the negotiations and any possible settlement.'[301] Indeed, Chamberlain would continue to emphasise alleged obstacles inherent in any collaboration between the Soviet Union and Britain throughout 1939. The Prime Minister realised that if an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance was to be prevented, he would have to work to ensure that the possibility of collaboration was not considered by his ministers to any greater extent.

The events and decisions taken during September 1938 revealed for the first time during Chamberlain's premiership that those involved in the foreign policy decision making process could, if they chose, put aside personal prejudices against the Soviet Union, and that this would determine attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration. Decisions and statements proved that alleged impossible obstacles preventing collaboration between Moscow and London were not, in fact, so impossible. The catalyst underlying decisions in September

[299] CAB 23 / 97 Cab. 6. 8 Feb, 1939.
[300] CAB 23 / 96 Cab. 56. 22 Nov, 1938.
[301] CAB 23 / 97 Cab 6. 8 Feb, 1939.

was a realisation of Hitler's aggressive intentions and a fear of war. After Munich, further rumours of Hitler's aggressive foreign policy ambitions and the first hint that a German - Soviet rapprochement was a possibility forced several ministers to realise the potential influence of the Soviet Union upon international affairs in the future. This motivated some to continue overlooking their suspicion and work towards improving Anglo-French-Soviet relations. Not all, however, supported such efforts. Indeed, a number of ministers had never been prepared to overlook their aversion to the Soviet Union throughout the entire crisis. The most notable example was the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. Furthermore, for those that were willing to try and mend fences with the Soviet government, it was difficult to keep aside their personal and hostile views of the Soviet Union. Their decision to overlook inherent suspicion would not be easy nor necessarily permanent, as events and decisions between March - May 1939 were to show.

Chapter Three:

Attitudes of the British Foreign Office, Moscow Embassy, and British diplomats towards the Soviet Union, May 1937 - March 1939.

Between May 1937 - March 1939, developments within the Soviet Union took a dramatic turn. Consequently, Stalin's dictatorship received greater attention from the British Foreign Office in London and the embassy in Moscow.[302] This chapter discusses the information officials collected, and provides a background to the decisions taken in London. It also looks at the opinions of the Soviet Union and of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration amongst those who were the first to learn of internal developments. What it reveals, is that, despite the weaknesses and horrors of the Soviet Union, attitudes towards collaboration were still ultimately determined by distrust, especially ideological distrust, and the willingness to overlook it.

Throughout this period, officials in Moscow worked very hard to accumulate information upon, and describe accurately the condition of, the Soviet Union for those in London.[303] Reports focused upon all areas of life; the nature of government and political developments, social issues, the condition of industry and agriculture, the strength of the armed forces, and Moscow's foreign policy intentions. Though, to a certain extent, the Soviet Union remained an enigma, officials were able to provide London with a largely accurate and certainly insightful portrayal of developments and views within the country. Officials did not know what went on inside the Kremlin[304] but one should not underestimate

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[302] Donald Lammers, 'Fascism, Communism and the Foreign Office', *Journal of Contemporary History,* (1971), pp. 67-8; For more information on the Diplomats in particular see, A. Gordon Craig and Felix Gilbert eds., *The Diplomats*, (Princeton, 1994).
[303] Michael Hughes, *Inside the enigma - British officials in Russia 1900 - 1939*, (London and Ohio, 1997).
[304] Andrews, *Secret Service*, p. 407.

the amount they did learn.[305]

The British ambassador in Moscow, Viscount Aretas Akers-Douglas Chilston, in particular, gained a great deal of knowledge about the country and its rulers. At the root of his portrayal during this period was what he considered to be Moscow's 'callousness and crude mendacity.'[306] The Soviet Union was not what many political idealists thought it to be. Chilston highlighted the rigged elections[307] and the poor social record of the supposed leaders of Socialism.[308] Though Moscow continued to mislead and claim that developments inside the Soviet Union had 'shown the whole world that with the Bolsheviks there is never any discrepancy between word and deed'[309] , in reality, Chilston explained, life for Soviet citizens was hard. He reported at the end of 1937, for example, that 'such important foodstuffs as flour..., potatoes, white bread of the poorer qualities...and *Sudak* (a staple item in the diet of the Moscow population) are all appreciably dearer than they were nine months ago', and that ' most kinds of winter clothing are scarce.'[310] Those who worked hard rested in 'insanitary and appallingly overcrowded tenements because the housing plan was allowed to go by the board.'[311] Chilston told the Foreign Secretary that the reason life was so hard for Soviet citizens was clear, namely, because social issues were wholly overshadowed by other issues such as defence, but most importantly the insurance of political control.[312]

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[305] Equally, although it would be true to say that British officials during this period did not realise the full extent of the purges, Chilston and others did clearly appreciate the nature of the purges and were not completely naive as to its extent. See M. Hughes, *Inside the Enigma,* p. 253.

[306] D. C. Watt ed., *British documents on foreign affairs, Part II Series A The Soviet Union, 1917 - 1939,* Vol. 15, (University Publications of America, Inc. 1986), Chilston to Halifax. 12 July, 1938. No. 290. Hereafter referred to as doc...D.F.A, 2, A.

[307] Chilston to Halifax. 28 June, 1938. doc. 286. D.F.A., 2, A.

[308] Chilston to Eden. 10 Dec, 1937. doc. 200; Chilston to Halifax. 21 Mar, 25 July, 1938. docs. 244, 290. Ibid.

[309] Ibid.

[310] Chilston to Eden. 10 Dec,1937. doc. 200. Ibid.

[311] Chilston to Halifax. 12 July, 1938. doc. 290. Ibid.

[312] Chilston to Eden. 10 Dec, 1937. doc. 200. Ibid.

The gravest result of Moscow's obsessive and dangerous desire for control were the purges. Reports upon the purges had first been received in London during 1937. In addition to show trials of old Bolsheviks[313], London had also been informed of the increasing danger to Soviet civilians.[314] The Soviet government, Chilston wrote, wanted complete political submission and it employed terror as the tool to ensure this.[315] 'The fact is', Chilston explained, ' a totalitarian atmosphere breeds blind fear of the exceptional.'[316] He described the meticulous planning that went into ensuring such control:

> A compulsory plebiscite must show at least 98 per cent "for". All political suspects must nowadays be found to be Trotskyists; all Trotskyists must seal their own death warrants by full confession, everything must conform exactly to the preconceived plan, and there must be no ragged ends, even for the sake of verisimilitude.[317]

'This is state planning carried to the pitch of madness', he wrote. '...Unquestionably, the note of insanity sounds very loud in the Soviet Union to-day.'[318]

At the end of 1937, Chilston informed the British government that the purges were by no means over[319] , and at the beginning of 1938, he could confirm that they were continuing with unabated fury.[320] At the end of January, Chilston hinted that there might be a possible decline in the ferocity of the purges in future.[321] However, such a belief did not last long. The terror had merely changed direction, focusing more upon those in the party and party organisations. In February, Chilston reported:

> ...during the last fortnight the campaign launched by the Plenum of the

[313] Chilston to Eden. 26 Jan, 4 Sept, 1937. docs. 20, 140. Ibid.
[314] Chilston to Eden. 6 Feb, 1937. docs. 22, 23. Ibid.
[315] Chilston to Halifax. 8 Mar,1938. doc. 241. Ibid.
[316] Chilston to Eden. 27 Dec, 1937. doc. 208. Ibid.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Chilston to Eden.13 Dec, 1937. doc. 202. Ibid.
[320] Chilston to Eden. 25 Jan, 1938. doc. 223. Ibid.
[321] Ibid.

Central Committee of the party against false informers and so-called reinsurers has been the principle theme of the Soviet press which has...described countless instances of completely unfounded denunciation against members of the party...the new development implies no abandonment of the terror as an instrument of Bolshevik policy, but merely the deflection of that instrument to other uses. There can be no doubt that the present campaign against informers will in its turn claim many innocent victims along with those who have really been guilty of malicious dilation.[322]

The first example of such party purges following this report was the show trial of the old Bolsheviks: Nikolai Bukharin, Aleksei Rykov, Nikolai Krestinsky, and G. G. Yagoda, the former head of the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs).[323] Like the show trials of 1937[324] , Chilston commented upon the farce of the accusations and of the process of trial:

> In general the present trial resembles the previous state trials, and the comment and criticism which have been devoted to them remain applicable in the present case. Once again there have been the fantastic charges and the inexplicable "confessions " of the accused, to be followed, no doubt, by a sentence of death in almost every case.[325]

The ambassador was sure of the 'highly unfavourable impression' the trial would create in London.[326] Nevertheless, the possible repercussion of such purges abroad did not appear to concern the authorities[327] , and at the end of March, Chilston reported upon the purge of the Komsomol (Communist League of Youth).[328]

Party members, especially, suffered as a result of the continuation of the

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[322] Chilston to Eden. 8 Feb, 1938. doc. 229. Ibid.
[323] For more on the show trials and the purges in general see, Robert Conquest, *The great terror: Stalin's purges of the thirties,* (London, 1968); Robert Conquest, *The great terror: a reassessment,* (London, 1990); Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives,* (London, 1993), pp. 493- 553.
[324] Chilston to Eden. 26 Jan,1937. doc. 20. D.F.A., 2, A.
[325] Chilston to Halifax. 8 Mar, 1938. doc. 241. Ibid.
[326] Chilston to Halifax. 21 Mar,1938. doc. 244. Ibid.
[327] Ibid.
[328] Chilston to Halifax. 29 Mar,1938. doc. 245. Ibid.

purges[329] , but they were not the only victims. Chilston's reports during the early months of 1938 also included descriptions of the terror directed against the National Republics. He informed London, for example, of the trial of M. Kulumbotov, previously President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. 'The charges brought ...', Chilston commented, '...are identical with those brought against ... other representatives of National Republics recently tried in Moscow.'[330]

Chilston also reported upon the religious persecutions. In early January, he had discovered that the 'metropolitan serge, Acting Patriarch and Supreme Head of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union' had been arrested: 'Large numbers of leading dignatories of the church, including twenty bishops, were arrested in December and January on charges of espionage, terrorism, and sabotage, and were consequently "liquidated"...'[331] Chilston noted the long history of religious persecution in the Soviet Union. 'To say that there had been "signs of a recrudescence of religious persecution in this country would scarcely be accurate', he wrote. 'For many years past the church in this country has been subjected to savage and practically incessant persecution.' During the past year, however, Chilston emphasised that 'the "purge" in every walk of life has been carried to unprecedented limits, and there can be no doubt that the church has suffered severely from this intensification of the reign of terror.'[332]

As far as Moscow's political aims were concerned, the purges were a success. At the beginning of 1937, opposition to Stalin's leadership had existed amongst the 'old Bolsheviks'[333] , and Chilston had reported that it was 'abundantly clear that discontent and opposition are rife beneath the surface.'[334] Throughout 1937,

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[329] Chilston to Halifax. 2 Apr, 1938. doc. 251. Ibid.
[330] Chilston to Halifax. 2 Apr, 1938. doc. 250. Ibid.
[331] Chilston to Halifax. 5 Apr, 1938. doc. 258. Ibid.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Chilston to Eden. 26 Jan,1937. doc. 20; Report on conditions in the Leningrad Consular District for the period 1 Jan, 1936, to 1 Feb, 1937. doc. 36. Inclosure. Chilston to Eden. 20 Feb,1937. doc. 35. Ibid.
[334] Chilston to Eden. 6 Feb,1937. doc. 23. Ibid.

however, the British embassy witnessed Stalin gain absolute control over his country. In May, Chilston referred to a 'desert of conformity.'[335] In August, he wrote that it was 'an obvious fact that throughout the Soviet Union all power comes from the Kremlin.'[336] By 1938, then, Chilston believed Moscow had achieved complete internal political control. There still existed some who might still oppose the regime[337] , but the government faced no significant opposition. The Soviet Union was politically stable. This did not, however, mean that the country could continue to survive at the mercy of such terror. Towards the end of Spring, the ambassador warned that although the 'Russian people, if sufficiently ground down, will support almost anything...',

> ...it is certain that the lack of suitable leaders in all branches of Soviet life, and the fact that such leaders as there are, whether suitable or unsuitable, live under the perpetual threat of liquidation and one, in fact, liquidated regularly and consecutively, are bound, by annihilating efficiency and destroying confidence, to have a highly deleterious effect on the life of the state.[338]

Indeed, the ambassador was already convinced of the devastating effects of Stalin's purges upon the economic condition of the Soviet Union and upon the condition of the armed forces.[339] It was not easy for Chilston and his advisers to obtain information about the Soviet economy in 1938. The ambassador noted that there was 'ample evidence of the reluctance or inability of the Soviet authorities to provide statistical information of economic and financial developments...'[340] Nevertheless, Chilston was certain that the Soviet economy, like all other areas of Soviet life, was subordinated to the political aims of the government[341] , and that this could only undermine Soviet economic progress.

[335] Chilston to Eden. 3 May, 1937. doc. 68. Ibid.
[336] Chilston to Halifax. 20 Aug, 1937. doc. 131. Ibid.
[337] Chilston to Halifax. 21 Mar, 1938. doc. 244. Ibid.
[338] Chilston to Halifax. 7 Apr, 1938. doc. 259. Ibid.
[339] For statistics regarding Soviet industrial and agricultural output during the 1930s see, Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin*, pp. 272 - 325; pp. 493 - 554.
[340] Chilston to Halifax. 14 Mar, 1938. doc. 242. D.F.A., 2, A.
[341] Ibid.

Influential figures needed for the smooth running of the economy were being purged. At the end of March, the ambassador wrote to London informing the Foreign Secretary,

> ...that the following Commissariats and other all-union economic organisations have been deprived of the chiefs by dismissal or arrest, usually both, since the middle of 1937: Finance State Bank, Foreign Trade, Heavy Industry, Light Industry, Agriculture, Timber, Railway Communications...,[342]

and many others. To these he added 'the innumerable arrests of assistant commissars and high officials, heads of central boards and trusts, (and) directors of factories.'[343]

Soviet industry in particular appeared to be undermined by the purges.[344] 'It is evident', Chilston wrote, 'that heavy industry suffered during 1937 from the relentless hunt for "wreckers" and the consequent excessive changes in executive and technical staff.'[345] In 1938, the situation had not improved. 'There is', he noted,

> ...every reason to suppose that the lack of men capable of holding responsible positions, requiring a certain degree of technical and administrative knowledge and experience, is making itself felt in every branch of Soviet life, and in particular in the field of industry.[346]

Those individuals equipped with that knowledge were frightened to take on responsibilities for fear of elimination. The 'inquisitions and persecutions' Chilston explained, '... have paralysed all sense of initiative in the leaders of Soviet industry.'[347] Poor output resulted.[348] Chilston noted, for example, that by the end of 1937, heavy industry 'was unable to perform the task of increasing its

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[342] Ibid.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Chilston to Halifax. 7 Apr,1938. doc. 259. Ibid.
[345] Chilston to Eden. 4 May, 1937, 4 Feb, 1938. docs. 74, 225. Ibid.
[346] Chilston to Halifax. 7 Apr, 1938. doc. 259. Ibid.
[347] Chilston to Eden. 7 Jan, 1938. doc. 209. Ibid.
[348] Chilston to Eden. 4 Feb, 1938. doc. 225. Ibid.

output by over 21 per cent.'[349] The output in 1938 also failed to satisfy Moscow.[350] In response, however, the Soviet government did not halt the purge of its workers. Rather, it replaced them with 'Stakhonovites and junior party officials, entirely regardless of their suitability for the post.'[351] Such action could not, Chilston informed London, 'be expected to produce satisfactory results.'[352]

Chilston's reports upon developments within the Soviet Union did not bode well for those in Britain who supported collaboration with Moscow concerning the crisis developing over Czechoslovakia.[353] When addressing the issue of collective resistance, especially, he provided further unequivocal support for those opposed to a resistance of German plans alongside Moscow and Paris. He agreed with the negative conclusions of the attachés with respect to Soviet military potential[354], and held a similarly negative view concerning Soviet economic potential in the event of war.[355] Chilston was later to be proved wrong. By 1943, the Soviet people had achieved a massive evacuation and relocation of Soviet industry east of the Urals. By 1944, the gross industrial production of the Soviet Union far exceeded pre-war levels.[356] Nevertheless, in 1938 Chilston thought it 'unlikely...that the Soviet economic system, already so disorganised in peace time, would be able to stand up to the strain imposed by a war.'[357]

In addition to believing the Soviet Union was not militarily or industrially capable of fighting, Chilston was, moreover, convinced that the Kremlin would not want to go to war in 1938. At the end of 1937, Chilston had told London

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[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Chilston to Halifax. 7 Apr,1938. doc. 259. Ibid.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Haslam, *Collective Security,* p. 129.
[354] Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr,1938. doc. 262. D.F.A., 2, A.
[355] Ibid.
[356] David Reynolds, W. F. Kimball, A. O. Chubarian ed., *Allies at War. The Soviet, American, and British Experience, 1939 - 1945,* (New York, 1994), p. xvii
[357] Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr,1938. doc. 262. D.F.A., 2, A.

that, in his opinion, the Soviet government was genuinely dedicated to a policy of collective security. Despite their inherent suspicion of the West[358] , he wrote, the Kremlin still believed this policy was in its best interest.[359] By April 1938, however, the ambassador believed that the threat posed to the stability of the regime by war would determine Stalin's aversion to any military action over Czechoslovakia. Chilston had repeatedly stressed the stability of the Soviet regime in his reports, but, he admitted, there would 'no longer be the same reasons for doubting the possibility of revolution, if this country were to become involved in war.'[360] Consequently, the ambassador told London 'that ... nothing short of an immediate threat to the integrity of Soviet territory would be held by the rulers of this country to justify entry into a war.'[361] He continued,

> I personally consider it highly unlikely that the Soviet government would declare war merely in order to fulfil their treaty obligations or even to forestall a blow to Soviet prestige or an indirect threat to Soviet security, such, for example, as the occupation by Germany of a part of Czechoslovakia.[362]

The ambassador, then, confirmed his agreement with the government's decision to reject Soviet overtures for collaboration regarding the crisis. He pointed out that there was 'no reason why, with time and in changed circumstances, it should not play an extremely important role in world affairs.' Nevertheless, in 1938, Chilston concluded that 'the Soviet Union must..., for the time being, be counted out of European politics in so far as the exercise of a decisive influence one way or the other is concerned.'[363]

It is not surprising that Chilston reached such a conclusion regarding collaboration with the Soviet Union over the Czechoslovakian crisis.

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[358] Chilston to Eden. 28 Dec, 1937. no. 404. D.B.F.P., II, Vol. XIX.
[359] Ibid.
[360] Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr,1938. doc. 262. D.F.A., 2, A.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid.

Throughout 1937 - 1938, the ambassador had repeatedly expressed his conviction that the Soviet government and its declarations were untrustworthy.[364] He referred to the 'nonsensical make-believe', 'the customary synthetic manifestations of enthusiasm', the 'trickery' and the 'cunning' of the Soviet rulers.[365] In fact, there was no evidence to prove Moscow's unwillingness to collaborate against aggression in Czechoslovakia.[366] However, during 1938 the Soviet government had done little to persuade those reluctant to collaborate with it. Indeed, at times during the year, the rhetoric and decisions of Moscow were decisively anti-British.[367] The British consulate in Leningrad was closed, despite a British protest[368] , and in March Chilston had pointed to 'the important and unsavoury role which has been allotted to Great Britain and the British intelligence service...'[369] in the trial of Bukharin and other old Bolsheviks. The ambassador regarded these references to Great Britain as a 'deliberate act of unfriendliness on the part of those who direct Soviet policy.'[370]

Chilston's reports changed very little after Munich. Though Soviet officials suggested that Soviet armed forces would be strengthened[371] , the purge continued. The ambassador informed London, for example, of the purge of Soviet forces in the Far East following Soviet - Japanese hostilities at Changkufeng in August.[372] Even the head of the purges was not exempt. In December, the leadership replaced M. N. I. Yezhov with M. L. P. Beriya as People's Commissar for Internal Affairs.[373] In response to London's concerns

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[364] Chilston to Halifax. 28 June, 1938. doc. 286. Ibid.
[365] Chilston to Eden. 13 Dec, 1937. doc. 202. Ibid.
[366] Roberts, proves convincingly that the Soviet government were in fact fully intent on defending Czechoslovakia together with Britain and France. See, Roberts, *Soviet Union,* pp. 49-61.
[367] Chilston to Halifax. 12 July, 1938. doc 291. D.F.A., 2, A.
[368] Chilston to Eden. 25 Jan, 1938. doc. 224. Ibid.
[369] Chilston to Halifax. 8 Mar, 1938. doc. 241. Ibid.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Chilston to Halifax. 15 Nov, 1938. doc. 314. Ibid.
[372] Chilston to Halifax. 1 Nov, 1938. doc. 312. Ibid.
[373] Vereker to Halifax. 12 Dec,1938. doc. 318. Ibid.

about Soviet isolationism, Chilston did not believe the Soviet government would remove itself entirely from international affairs.[374] Yet, he did comment upon the 'markedly aged' and 'more careworn' appearance of Stalin during the months following Munich.[375] For those in London already concerned about the effects of the Kremlin's exclusion from the conference, such an observation may well have increased their fears that the Soviet dictator was tired of having his feelers towards the West rebuffed, and that he would soon abandon efforts to establish cooperation.

Not all reports sent by the Moscow embassy were compiled by Viscount Chilston during this period. Two officials in particular that collated information and put forward strong views about the Soviet Union were Fitzroy Maclean, third secretary, and G. Vereker, counsellor in the embassy. Maclean, for example, provided further insights regarding Soviet economic progress and political stability. Travelling throughout the Soviet Union during the year, Maclean acknowledged both the economic achievements and failings of the Soviet government.[376] 'It cannot be denied', he wrote, 'that in the realm of industry,...a good deal has been achieved, and is being achieved.'[377] In general, however, his comments were negative. Hence, he concluded, that 'everywhere' Soviet standards of living and of productivity were 'far lower than ordinary European standards.'[378] In addition Maclean thought that little had been achieved that could not have been achieved by the previous Tsarist regime. Indeed, he questioned 'whether as much or more would not have been achieved in the same period under almost any other regime. The Empire of the Tsar also had numerous not inconsiderable achievements to its credits...'[379] The purges

[374] Chilston to Halifax. 18 Oct,1938. doc. 311. Ibid.
[375] Chilston to Halifax.15 Nov, 1938. doc. 314. Ibid.
[376] Maclean. Account of journey through Siberia and Kazakhstan to Tashkent and Samarkand. Doc. 207. Inclosure in Chilston to Eden. 24 Dec, 1937. doc. 206. Ibid.
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid.

were another subject Maclean commented upon, and though, like Chilston, he accepted the political stability of the Soviet regime,[380] he too made clear his abhorrence of the methods employed by Moscow to ensure such control.[381]

Vereker shared such disgust at the purges and wrote several reports regarding the persecution of the church during this period.[382] In addition to this, Vereker's findings provided further insight into the condition of the Soviet countryside. There was little information available to the officials regarding developments within the countryside during this period. The Soviet authorities were showing an 'increasing unwillingness to publish up-to-date statistics' on agriculture, as with all subjects.[383] Nevertheless, Vereker did highlight the discontent the existed as a result of the collective farm system.[384] "There can be no doubt that the arbitrary way in which collective farms are administered, and the arbitrary treatment of collectivised peasants by local government and party officials, have caused grave discontent throughout the country...' he wrote.[385] Thus, apart 'from the danger of passive resistance', the Soviet government also 'found themselves faced with the possibility that, if life was made too unpleasant for the members of collective farms, they would dissolve their collectives and set up as individual peasants.'[386] In April, Moscow responded to the discontent by issuing a decree increasing 'the proportion of the revenues of the collective farms paid as wages to the collective farm workers.'[387] But Vereker was clearly not impressed. The Soviet rulers, he told London,

> ...are no doubt anxious to ensure that, with industry in a bad way, the army, to say the least of it, not at its best, and the international situation most alarming, their troubles should not be added to by a wave of passive

[380] Ibid
[381] Ibid.
[382] Vereker to Halifax. 16 May, 1938. doc. 268. Ibid.
[383] Moscow Chancery to Northern Department. 7 Apr, 1938. FO 371 / 22298.
[384] Vereker to Halifax. 3 May, 1938. doc. 267. D.F.A., 2, A.
[385] Telegram from Vereker. 3 May, 1938. FO 371 / 22298.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Telegram from Seeds. 13 June, 1939. FO 371 / 23688.

resistance amongst the peasantry.[388]

He continued; 'The abuses which it is now sought to remedy are to a great extent the natural consequences of the collective system. Solicitude for the welfare of the individual has never in practice been a feature of the totalitarian system of government,...'[389] His doubt about the government's apparent concern for the welfare of the peasants was confirmed in December when the decree was rescinded because of an alleged increase in 'bourgeois tendencies.' The reaction of the peasants, Vereker warned London, was unpredictable.[390]

The suffering of Soviet citizens under the Stalinist regime was clearly of great concern to members of the British embassy. Yet it is revealing that neither Chilston, Maclean, nor Vereker put forward social or moral reasons when arguing against collaboration with the Soviet Union over the Sudetenland crisis. Vereker, too, opposed collaboration with the Soviets over the Czech crisis in 1938, but like Chilston, emphasised what he considered to be Moscow's insincerity as the main reason.[391] Soviet foreign policy aims, he warned, were in fact 'purely national and selfish.'[392] Once more distrust was at the root of opposition to Anglo-Soviet collaboration.

Though both Chilston and Vereker commented upon the role of the Soviet Union in the Sudetenland crisis, it was the military attachés in Moscow who focused primarily upon the question of Soviet potential and willingness to participate in any future conflict. Like most officials within the embassy, the military attachés, too, faced difficulties trying to obtain information from the

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[388] Telegram from Vereker. 3 May, 1938. FO 371 / 22298.
[389] Ibid.
[390] Telegram from Vereker. 19 Dec, 1938. Ibid.
[391] Vereker to Halifax. 14 June,1938. doc. 280. D.F.A.,2 ,A.
[392] Vereker to Halifax. 2 May ,1938. doc. 266. Ibid.

Soviet authorities.[393] Captain Clanchy, the British naval attaché, for example, noted at the beginning of 1938 that he had 'not been permitted to see any naval units or establishments since the 26th June last year.'[394] Colonel Firebrace, the British military attaché, similarly complained in April 1938; 'For the last six months, I have not been allowed to see any units, and it is clear that it is at present the policy to refuse visits to all military attachés.'[395] Nevertheless, each were able to provide information, and draw conclusions, upon Soviet military potential. Colonel Firebrace reported upon the condition of the Red Army during this period. Like Chilston, the purges and their consequences dominated Firebrace's reports.

The purge of the army had begun in June 1937.[396] Experienced and competent officers were killed, including Marshal Tuchachevski, a national hero during the Russian civil war.[397] Firebrace's disgust at such developments was obvious. 'To my mind', he wrote, 'it is impossible to feel anything but contempt for a man who sacrifices his colleagues in this way.'[398] By 1938, he could see no evidence that the purge of the armed forces would end soon. He told Chilston in February; 'It would not appear that the "purge" of the senior officers in the Red Army is over, as there are indications that many of these have recently been relieved of their appointments and have passed on to unknown fate.'[399] According to the information collated by the embassy, by 1938 the purge had accounted for no less than sixty five per cent of the high ranks.[400] Firebrace

[393] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 18 Apr. 1938. doc. 263. Inclosure in Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc. 262 ; Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 2 July,1938. doc. 292. Ibid; Watt, *How war came*, pp. 610-11.
[394] Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 2 July, 1938. doc. 292. D.F.A., 2, A.
[395] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 18 Apr, 1938. doc. 263 Inclosure in Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc. 262. Ibid.
[396] Colonel Firebrace to MacKillop. 31 May, 1937. doc. 91. Inclosure in MacKillop to Eden. 1 June, 1937. doc. 90. Ibid.
[397] Colonel Firebrace to MacKillop. doc. 102. Inclosure in MacKillop to Eden. 15 June, 1937. doc. 101. Ibid.
[398] Ibid.
[399] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 3 Mar, 1938. doc. 233. Ibid.
[400] Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc. 262. Ibid.

confirmed that, like other groups within Soviet society, the valuable members of the army had been purged as part of the government's determination to secure absolute control. There was, Firebrace believed,

> ...no alternative between accepting what will eventually be the official version, namely, that they are all traitors to their country, or considering that Stalin is sufficiently unbalanced to get rid, without remorse or pity, of any who may be thought to have the possibility of opposing his authority in any degree.[401]

The result was inefficiency in the Red Army.[402]

Inefficiency also resulted from the politicisation and lack of education of the armed forces. At the beginning of the year Firebrace informed London that the military press in the Soviet Union were 'paying great attention to the question of the general education standard of the Commanding personnel of the Red Army.' The military attaché 'could not help feeling', however, 'that the existing standard and the standard to be attained are so low that it has been thought desirable not to broadcast them to the world.'[403] This 'low standard of general education', he believed, 'must reflect on the efficiency of the army.'[404] The politicisation of the army, which involved ensuring replacement soldiers were politically loyal to the leadership, also reduced efficiency. In particular, Firebrace attacked the 'introduction of the system of military councils and military commissars.'[405] As early as September 1937, Firebrace had emphasised the difficulties resulting from politicisation in the event of war. He had informed Chilston that '...in time of war, if the regulation with regard to all orders being jointly signed by the commanding officer and the Commissar is persisted in, rapid and really vital decisions will seldom be made.' This, he said,

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[401] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 3 Mar, 1938. doc. 233.
[402] Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc. 262.
[403] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 7 Feb, 1938. doc. 230. Ibid.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston 18 Apr, 1938. doc. 263. Inclosure in Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc 262. Ibid.

would 'only result in vacillation and inefficiency.'[406] In 1938, the military attaché did acknowledge the possibility of improvement within the armed forces. He noted, for example, that the low standard of education 'should to some extent disappear in course of time...'[407] He also thought that 'a great effort may...be expected to increase the strength of the artillery arm.'[408] The possibility of improvement was an important consideration for those in London, especially as the aggressive nature of Germany's future plans became clear. Nevertheless, at the time when a decision had to be made regarding the defence of Czechoslovakia, Firebrace portrayed the Soviet army as comparatively weak.[409]

Consequently, Firebrace concluded that the Soviet Union was not ready for war. 'It can be stated with confidence', he reported, 'that the Red army today is less prepared for war than it was in April 1937.'[410] Regarding the Czechoslovakian crisis in particular, Firebrace warned: 'From a military point of view there must be considerable doubt as to whether the Soviet Union is capable of fulfilling its obligations under the pact with Czechoslovakia and France by undertaking a war of offence.'[411] Amongst other weaknesses, Firebrace thought that 'the disorganisation prevailing in every branch of Soviet production distribution and transport would be bound to prove highly detrimental in time of war.[412] Not only did Firebrace perceive the Soviet Union to be militarily incapable of assisting Czechoslovakia, he also believed, like Chilston, that Moscow had no intention of involving itself in war. The Soviet government would not want to engage in a war 'which might have very dangerous consequences for the Soviet regime', he wrote.[413] Indeed, the attaché believed Moscow would only go to war if the Soviet

[406] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 6 Sept, 1937. doc. 147. Ibid.
[407] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 7 Feb, 1938. doc. 230. Ibid.
[408] Chilston to Halifax. 7 Mar, 1938. doc. 235; Chilston to Eden. 8 Feb,1938. doc. 229. Ibid.
[409] Ibid.
[410] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 18 Apr, 1938. doc. 263. Inclosure in Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc. 262. Ibid.
[411] Ibid.
[412] Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc. 262. Ibid.
[413] Vereker to Halifax. 31 May, 1938. doc. 274. Ibid.

Union, and so the Stalinist regime, was under attack. Firebrace explained that the Red Army could not carry a war 'into the enemy's territory with any hope of ultimate success or without thereby running the risk of endangering the regime.'[414] As a result, it was 'contrary to reason for the rulers of this country to involve the Soviet Union in war unless vital national interests were involved.'[415]

The Soviet Union could, the attaché noted, fight a defensive war effectively.[416] 'In defence of its territory, I still consider that the Red Army would be a formidable opponent', Firebrace wrote.[417] Thus, the country could present an awesome second front. However, in Firebrace's opinion, Moscow did not believe there to be a big enough threat in 1938 to make the risk of war worth taking. This did not mean the Soviet Union would never go to war. The attaché reported that 'the Soviet Union consider that war, if not inevitable, is highly likely some time not too far distant.' There was, he noted, 'a great effort ...being made in the army to prepare for the eventuality of war and...the war mentality [was] being strenuously cultivated not only in the army but also amongst the civilian population.'[418] He warned, however, that 'this does not...necessarily mean that the Soviet Union would be prepared to fight this year.' Thus, Firebrace summarised: 'I remain...of the opinion, that the Soviet Union will do everything possible to avoid engaging in war this year, and that it will find any pretext to avoid the necessity of having to fulfil its engagements to Czechoslovakia and France.'[419] Notably the attaché had stressed that Russia's inability and unwillingness to risk war applied only to the year 1938. This was another important consideration for those in London, and perhaps partly explains why

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[414] Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc. 262. Ibid.
[415] Ibid.
[416] Ibid.
[417] Colonel Firebrace to Chilston. 18 Apr, 1938. doc. 263. Inclosure in Chilston to Halifax. 19 Apr, 1938. doc. 262. Ibid.
[418] Colonel Firebrace to Vereker. 30 May, 1938. doc. 275. Inclosure in Vereker to Halifax. 31 May, 1938. doc. 274. Ibid.
[419] Ibid.

Halifax and others became concerned about Moscow reverting to a policy of isolationism following the Munich conference. During the final months of the year, however, London received no evidence that dramatic improvements were occurring in the condition of the army.

The Soviet air force and navy were, similarly, in poor condition. 'Although the Soviet Air Forces are the largest in the world to-day' it was reported, 'in the first line strength they suffer from several weaknesses which will considerably reduce their effectiveness for the next twelve months or so.' Of the approximately 4, 000 aircraft, for example, 75% were thought to be 'obsolescent types, including 750 old type heavy bombers...' It was acknowledged that the Soviet bombers that existed could 'constitute a powerful striking force' in the event of war, but as a result of Moscow's efforts to replace existing aircraft 'with types generally comparable in all round performance to those of other major air powers', 'no marked improvement in the first line strength' was anticipated in the immediate future.[420] The Soviet government did appear, then, to be working to improve its airforce. It was reported that the 'present rulers of the Soviet Union regard the development of aviation in general, and of the airforce in particular, as a matter of the greatest national importance.' The aircraft industry in the Soviet Union had a potential plant capacity 'may times greater' than its output at the end of 1937 . Morale amongst air crew was also thought to be high. However, British observers did not think that aircraft output would exceed that of the 6,000 airframes and 20,000 engines it was producing in December 1937, 'even in war'. Furthermore, there was 'a serious shortage of reserves of trained flying and skilled personnel.' As with the red army there appeared to be a 'poor standard of training and maintenance.' Consequently, although it was thought 'that in its existing state the Soviet Airforce presents a real threat to any neighbour who might desire to risk war', it was also believed to be

[420] Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air on the Air Force of the USSR. 23 Dec, 1937. FO 371 / 22292.

'unlikely...that after the initial blow the U.S.S.R. would be able to maintain her effort.'[421] When in May the British airforce attaché in Moscow, Captain Hallawell, observed the May Day celebrations, he reported that the display by the Soviet airforce was disappointing.'[422]

Captain Clanchy, the British royal naval attaché, emphasised, like Firebrace, the damage inflicted upon the navy's effectiveness by the purges and Moscow's policy of politicisation. The purge of the navy had begun in October 1937.[423] As late as September 1937, Clanchy's reports had been positive. He had thought, for example, that 'the U.S.S.R' had 'already attained a good start over her potential enemies, Germany and Japan.' Furthermore, he believed, there was 'no lack of trained personnel...'[424] By 1938, however, Clanchy reported that not only were workers in shipbuilding factories being purged as alleged wreckers[425], but, moreover, experienced officers, needed to command such warships effectively, were also being purged. The personnel of the navy were, Clanchy reported 'cleansing itself of traitors, spies and similar Fascist scum.'[426] In July, he wrote that it was 'possible to form some fairly reasonable estimate of the numbers and categories of...naval officers who have fallen victim to the "purge"':

> Every important naval command ashore and afloat, with [one] exception..., has been affected...In actual figures the "purge" has accounted for twelve flag officers, fourteen engineer flag officers, and twenty one post captains, representing a total percentage loss of about 50 per cent. Amongst high ranking political officers the percentage figure is somewhat higher. All naval attachés who had served abroad up to the summer of last year are amongst the number who have gone. Personnel below the rank of Commander does not appear to have been touched,

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[421] Ibid.
[422] Vereker to Halifax. 2 May, 1938. doc. 265. D.F.A., 2, A.
[423] MacKillop to Eden. 4 Oct,1937. doc. 164. Ibid.
[424] Captain Clanchy to MacKillop. 18 Sept, 1937. doc. 155. Ibid.
[425] Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 17 Jan, 1938. doc. 222. Ibid.
[426] Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 4 Feb, 1938. doc. 227. Ibid.

> and at present only about seventeen commanders have been identified as having been "purged".[427]

The lower ranks of the navy did not appear to have been purged so ruthlessly, but these men were incapable of commanding the Soviet navy. 'It would appear', Clanchy reported, 'that one of the greatest disadvantages which the fleet is now experiencing is the lack of trained and competent staffs in the principal sea commands.'[428] As a result of the elimination of so many experienced naval officers 'a striking effect of the "purge"' had become 'the appointment of extremely young flag and commanding officers', influenced by the politicisation process. Clanchy, like Firebrace, assumed that

> ...the change in naval administration and the jettonising of the principles of a combined staff have been brought about by a desire on the part of Stalin to run no further risks from opposition to his regime in the ranks of the armed forces of the country. [429]

Such politicisation, however, resulted in low morale. Clanchy thought it 'questionable whether the navy has been able to withstand the disastrous reaction on morale caused by the sudden removal of trusted and respected officers.'[430] 'Even more important and more widely felt', he stressed, 'is the reestablishment of a strict and all-pervading political central, exercised alike on both officers and men.... masses of political officers, ... openly criticise and spy on their own kind as well as on their ship's officers',[431]

However, such developments had not, by 1938, completely undermined the worth and potential of the Soviet navy. In January, Clanchy had reported upon Moscow's planned expansion of the navy.[432] He added that 'further secret

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[427] Ibid.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 8 Jan, 1938. doc. 215. Inclosure in Chilston to Eden. 11 Jan, 1938. doc. 214. Ibid.
[430] Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 2 July, 1938. doc. 292. Ibid.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 17 Jan, 1938. doc. 222. Ibid.

submarine construction, especially in the Far East, may be contemplated.'[433] In a later report, Clanchy noted; 'Battleships have been modernised and both qualitatively and quantitively the submarine fleet has been developed.'[434] Notably, Clanchy's reports also revealed that the navy had suffered far less from the purges than, for example, the Red Army. He informed the British ambassador, Chilston, that 'submarine personnel, with the exception of three or four senior officers, has not been "purged", and the same is probably true of the naval air force.'[435] It appeared, then, that the Soviet submarine core of the navy, in particular, had remained in good condition. But Clanchy did not believe the Soviet Union's future lay only in its submarine strength. Indeed, the attaché believed the Soviet naval forces could and would probably improve. He warned against dismissing Soviet potential in the future and highlighted 'another side to the picture'. The attaché explained:

> The Government have announced their intention of building a large navy. The submarine and naval air services are still both efficient and sound. In another two or three years time the exceptionally young Commanders-in Chief, together with their captains, will have learnt much from experience. The numerous naval colleges and technical training schools are already beginning to turn out officers and party officers of all specialities in large numbers. The discipline of the lower deck is still probably sound at heart. Money will be lavished to an even greater extent on the navy, and personnel will have new ships and weapons to busy themselves with.[436]

It is interesting that, unlike Chilston and other members of the embassy, Clanchy did not completely reject Moscow's announcements and promises as propaganda. From what Clanchy had learnt throughout the year the Soviet leadership did seem committed to acquiring and maintaining naval power. This did not, however, mean the Soviet navy could effectively fight a war in 1938. In

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[433] Ibid.
[434] Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 4 Feb, 1938. doc. 227. Ibid.
[435] Captain Clanchy to Chilston. 2 July, 1938. doc. 292. Ibid.
[436] Ibid.

Clanchy's opinion it would take approximately two to three years for sufficient improvement. Such improvement would also be dependent upon the leadership abolishing current measures of political control. 'The navy cannot really become 100 per cent efficient until something effective is done to abolish, or at least reduce, the status of the political officer'[437] , he reported. Unfortunately for those who supported Anglo-Soviet collaboration in Britain, Clanchy could not report with any certainty whether and when such political domination would lessen. He admitted to being 'quite unable to hazard an opinion as to the extent to which the navy will be able to free itself from political control.' For the navy, indeed for all of the armed forces and vital services of the country 'the problem', Clanchy identified, was 'linked up with the whole system by which a few men are able to hold the country down and administer the Government.'[438]

Though some of what Britain's attachés predicted about the Soviet armed forces was to be proved correct during the war, it is important to note that they, like Chilston, greatly underestimated the capabilities of the Soviet Union. Between June 1941 and June 1944, for example, approximately 93% of total German army battle casualties were inflicted by Soviet forces. Furthermore, technologically, the Soviet Union was able to match the Germans in key weaponry, such as T34 tanks and 'Katyusha' rocket launchers.[439] In 1938, however, the attachés had not witnessed any evidence of such potential. As a result of its unwillingness to allow access to important developments and information, the Soviet government had undermined its own foreign policy.[440]

Some of the first to read and respond to the reports sent by Moscow were the

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[437] Ibid.
[438] Ibid.
[439] David Reynolds, W. F. Kimball, and A. O. Chubarian ed., *Allies*, pp. xvi - xvii.
[440] Donald Watt points out that Soviet secrecy concerning its military potential meant London did not receive any information to challenge the negative opinion they held of Russia's armed forces. See, Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 610-611.

Foreign Office officials in Whitehall, particularly those in the Northern Department. Most held similar opinions to those expressed by officials in the embassy regarding the nature and consequences of Stalin's purges, and the condition of the Soviet armed forces and industry. Soviet foreign policy intentions, however, and the issue of collaboration with the Soviets, caused division. What deliberations and minutes amongst Foreign Office personnel confirmed, was that attitudes towards collaboration were ultimately determined by whether they were willing to put aside ideological distrust.

One aspect of the Soviet Union which evoked agreed response from those in London was its internal system. Reports regarding life under Stalin's dictatorship stirred horror, suspicion and animosity within officials. It was not, for example, thought to be a hospitable country for British citizens and foreign diplomats. There was much criticism about the behaviour of the Soviet authorities. The decision to expel the British consulate in Leningrad in January 1938 especially evoked outrage.[441] There existed a great amount of sympathy for British officials having to experience Soviet life, so much so that Sir Lancelot Oliphant, Deputy Under Secretary in the Foreign Office, noted; 'at times one is inclined to ask oneself whether in view of their treatment by the Soviet it is fair to keep an ambassador in Moscow.'[442]

Officials knew well, however, that life for their colleagues in Moscow was not as desperate as life for the majority of Soviet citizens. They noted in detail their horror at the reports of the terror that dominated Soviet society.[443] They were also in agreement upon the devastating effects the purges were seemingly having upon Soviet armed forces and industry, and hence the potential of the country. Robert Hadow, a junior official in the Northern Department, believed

[441] Minutes by Walker, 12 and 13 Jan, 1939; Minute by Collier 13 Jan, 1939. FO 371/ 22289.
[442] Minute by Oliphant. 25 July, 1938. FO 371/ 22301.
[443] Minute by Russell. 24 May, 1938. FO 371/ 22286.

that 'the Soviet army has suffered a set back from which it can only recover when its officers again organise the "espirit de corps" and comparative independence of politics that was there before the purges.' Hadow personally did not think this would occur under Stalin's leadership.[444] Gladwyn Jebb, soon to become Private Secretary to the Permanent Under Secretary, pointed out that it was not only British observers who realised Soviet weakness. The German government, he minuted, had 'come to the same conclusion' and Hitler was 'calculating accordingly.'[445] Others, such as Laurence Collier, Head of the Northern Department, acknowledged the devastation inflicted and dismissed Soviet propaganda of alleged military strength as 'ludicrous.'[446]

Officials also noted the effects of the purges upon Soviet industrial efficiency. Ashton Gwatkin, the Foreign Office Economic Adviser, for example, pointed out that the lack of skilled or semi-skilled labour in the Soviet Union was 'becoming a very serious problem in a suddenly and artificially industrialised country.'[447]

D. W. Lascelles , First Secretary in the Northern Department minuted;

> In practically every branch of industry conditions are rapidly going from bad to worse, and there is no sign that a turning-point is likely to be reached in the immediate future. The fundamental causes of deterioration are over-ambitious "paper planning" and stark political insanity - the first being due in large measure to the fears created by the second.[448]

Industrial achievements were noted by some. Gwatkin, thought some judgments 'unduly pessimistic.'[449] Aubrey Halford, a junior official in the Northern Department, minuted: 'There have been improvements in some branches of industry - e.g. heavy industry, food industry, mechanic

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[444] Minute by Hadow. 23 Feb, 1938. FO 371/ 22298.
[445] Minute by Jebb. 19 Apr, 1938. Ibid.
[446] Minute by Collier. 21 Mar, 1938. FO 371/ 22286.
[447] Minute by Gwatkin. 2 Sept, 1938. FO 371/ 22287.
[448] Minute by Lascelles. 25 Oct, 1938. FO 371/ 22293.
[449] Minute by Gwatkin. 25 Oct, 1938. Ibid

construction, and oil industry.'[450] Yet, Gwatkin, Halford and others agreed that conditions within Soviet industry, indeed the Soviet economy in general, could not be described as 'healthy.'[451]

The purges were thought to be debilitating efficiency in all areas and as a result, officials in Whitehall also believed that the Soviet Union was incapable of aiding Czechoslovakia effectively in any forthcoming war. Hadow believed this[452] , as did Jebb.[453] But military and economic weakness were not thought to be the only reasons, or indeed the main reasons, why no effective assistance would be afforded to Czechoslovakia in the event of war. More importantly, and like those in the Moscow embassy, officials in Whitehall thought that Moscow did not actually want to help its ally.[454] They, too, distrusted Soviet promises of assistance. Alexander Cadogan believed this[455] , as did Hadow and Halford.[456] Jebb minuted, 'the Soviet government dare not risk a war whose only certain result would be destruction of the present government.'[457] Hence, it is not surprising that such officials were particularly angered by Soviet attacks upon British foreign policy during this period.[458] Hadow criticised the Soviet 'farce of attacking British efforts to prevent wars.'[459] But where did such distrust stem from? In contrast to the ambassador and his officials in Moscow, minutes in the FO 371 records reveal that officials in London felt no political compulsion to suppress, or edit in anyway, their true feelings towards the Soviet Union and

[450] Minute by Halford. 24 Nov, 1938. Ibid.
[451] Minute by Gwatkin. 25 Oct, 1938; Minute by Walker. 26 Apr, 1938; Minute by Halford. 24 Nov, 1938. Ibid.
[452] Minute by Hadow. 26 Apr, 2 Sept, 1938. FO 371/ 22293, FO 371/ 22287.
[453] Minute by Jebb. 24 Mar, 19 Apr, 1938. FO 371/ 22292, FO 371/ 22298.
[454] For detailed discussion regarding Moscow's intentions towards Czechoslovakia in 1938, see Roberts, *Soviet Union*, pp. 49-61;Lukes, 'Stalin and Czechoslovakia.'
[455] Minute by Cadogan. FO 371 / 22276. Cited in Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, p. 93. (September, 1938).
[456] Minute by Hadow. 14 Nov, 1938. FO 371/ 22301; Minute by Halford. 14 Nov, 1938. Ibid; Moscow Chancery to Northern Department. 12 Dec, 1938. FO 371/ 22299.
[457] Minute by Jebb. 19 Apr, 1938. FO 371/ 22298.
[458] Minute by Russell. 12 July, 1938. FO 371/ 22289; Minute by Collier. 22 June, 1938. FO 371/ 22288.
[459] Minute by Hadow. 22 June 1938. Ibid.

Communism. As a result their minutes provide a unique and valuable insight into what members of the British political elite genuinely thought. What their minutes revealed was that most of those who opposed collaboration with the Soviets over the Czech crisis, actually opposed closer Anglo-Soviet relations *per se*, and at the root of this opposition was their ideological prejudice against the Soviet Union. Some, namely, Alexander Cadogan, opposed discussion of ideological factors and claimed that all decisions made by government were entirely practical.[460] However, an examination of the evidence reveals not only the existence, but also the influence, of such ideological opinions upon attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet relations. The minutes looked at in this chapter were mainly written in response to two documents. The first document was a copy of a statement by Stalin which was originally published in Pravda on 14 February and subsequently reprinted in the Times on 15 February. The statement was in reply to questions put to M. Stalin by M. Ivanoff, a young Communist League member and propagandist in a district of the Kursk region. The statement read:

> M. Stalin distinguished between two problems:-
> [1] The problem of the internal relations of our country, that is the problem of overcoming our own bourgeoisie and building complete socialism.
> [2] The problem of the external relations of our country, that is the problem of fully securing our country from the dangers of armed intervention and restoration.
> The first problem said M. Stalin, had been solved, for the bourgeoisie had been liquidated and Socialism had been built in the main...
> Turning to the second problem, that of external relations, M. Stalin said:-
> But since we live not on an island but "in a system of states" a considerable part of which are hostile to the land of Socialism, creating danger, intervention and restoration, we say frankly and honestly that a victory of Socialism in our country is not yet final. But from this it follows that the second problem has not yet been solved and it will have to be solved. It could be solved said M. Stalin, only by joining the serious efforts of the international proletariat with the still more serious efforts

[460] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 132-3.

of the whole Soviet people.[461]

The second document was a memorandum on the comparative threat of Fascism and Communism, written by D. W. Lascelles.[462]

Robert Hadow and Gladwyn Jebb, especially, held similarly strong opinions regarding the Soviet Union and the Communist ideological threat. Though Jebb, for example, acknowledged Stalin's letter was perhaps 'chiefly intended to provide Soviet citizens who have been terrified by the internal purge with fresh tasks in the hope of speeding Communism abroad and combating foreign aggression'[463], he nevertheless thought it would lead to an 'increase in subversive propaganda abroad.'[464] Jebb was convinced that Moscow's ultimate aim was expansion. He warned that the 'trend' towards 'imperialism and expansion' was now on the increase.[465] Throughout Europe there was the threat of 'Marxian socialism' spreading. 'Soviet doctrines', he wrote, 'are by far the greater ultimate danger to this country and to the Empire.' Jebb explained that Moscow was only calling for collaboration with the West because of the weak state of its own armed forces. In 1938, the Soviet Union was incapable of practically achieving a world revolution.[466] Yet, despite such internal weakness, Jebb still considered the Soviet Union to be a real threat because of ideological differences. Moscow's dedication to 'Marxian socialism', he believed, made it impossible for the Soviet Union to ever stop being a menace to British interests. He did not accept the Soviet government's alleged willingness to collaborate with Britain because 'the consequences of the ideal world revolution' was a

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[461] Letter published in "Times" 15 Feb, 1938. FO 371 / 22288. (For full document see *Appendix II*).
[462] Vereker to Collier. Transmits draft memorandum. 11 June, 1938. Ibid. (See *Appendix III*).
[463] Minute by Jebb. 15 Feb, 1938. Ibid.
[464] Minute by Jebb. 27 Feb, 1938. Ibid; For more on the workings of the Comintern during this period see, K. McDermott and J. Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin,* (New York, 1997).
[465] Minute by Jebb. 11 June, 1938. FO 371 / 22288.
[466] Ibid.

fundamental hatred of western democracies.[467] Indeed, Jebb believed that the incompatibility of Moscow's aim for 'world revolution' and 'domination', and Britain's 'democratic empire' made Britain the Soviet Union's 'principal enemy'.[468]

Robert Hadow agreed with Jebb's views. He was also suspicious about Moscow's alleged dedication to cooperation with the West. He questioned, for example, whether the anti-British tone of the executive committee of the Comintern International or the 'Geneva Litvinov talk' 'was the true voice of Russia'.[469] Personally, Hadow believed that the former was genuinely representative of Soviet thinking. He thought the Soviet Union remained the threat it always had been. Hadow responded to Stalin's letter in January by noting that;

> ...the explanations given last Sunday in Hyde Park by the speakers of various Communist bodies in Great Britain fully bear out Lord Chilston's statement that M. Stalin's letter was, whether by design or accident, open to precisely the interpretation which best suited the views of the various bodies in and out of Russia. These "explanations" would, I think, have interested those who believed that subversive propaganda for the achievement of an "universal Socialist state" is no longer, [or to a lesser extent], part of the Moscow programme.[470]

Paul Falla, a junior official in the Northern Department, aptly commented in an analysis of Anglo-Soviet relations throughout the 1920s and 1930s, that 'political relations,..., continue to be clouded by the persistence of suspicion, in spite of the Anglo-Soviet agreement of 1929 for the mutual renunciation of subversive activities of Comintern propaganda...'[471]

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[467] Ibid.
[468] Ibid.
[469] Minute by Hadow. 2 May, 1938. Ibid.
[470] Minute by Hadow. 8 Mar, 1938. Ibid.
[471] Minute by Falla 15 Jan, 1938. FO 371 / 22294.

It was because of their own intense mistrust of Soviet intentions that officials were indignant about Moscow's apparent success at manipulating the British people and government. Hadow expressed his anger at what he believed to be Moscow's success at pulling the wool over so many eyes regarding its true nature. He despised the 'man in the street' and the intellectual 'pinkies' and 'leftists' who were persuaded of the sincerity of the trials and so denied the barbarity and failure of the 'Socialist' system in the the Soviet Union.[472] Jebb was also anxious and angered by what he perceived to be the leniency shown by intellectuals towards the Soviet Union and the complacency felt regarding the threat of revolution. 'There is', he minuted, 'a growing school of intellectual thought- in this country quite as much as in France or elsewhere - which feels that Marxian Socialism "should be given a chance", ... Of this trend of thought Russia is undoubtedly taking advantage...' Moscow, he warned, was playing with the 'mouse she hopes to devour.' [473] The official went on, 'Already religion is being sapped; patriotism is considered insufficient as an ideal by or for the young; and a vague "internationalism" which is closely akin to Popular Front doctrines is the cry of intellectual youth.'[474]

Unsurprisingly, Jebb and Hadow opposed any close relations with the Soviet Union. Hadow's opposition was made all the more obvious by his declarations of support for closer Anglo-German relations.[475] Though Jebb did not dismiss the possibility that Britain might be 'compelled to cooperate with and use Russia as a counter-poise to Fascism', he warned that London would have to do so 'with its eyes open.'[476] Jebb's intense suspicion meant that if any alternatives remained he would always oppose Anglo-Soviet collaboration. Similar opinions were held by Orme Sargent, Cadogan's deputy and Assistant Under Secretary of

[472] Chilston 8 Mar,1938. FO 371 / 22286.
[473] Minute by Jebb. 11 June, 1938. FO 371 / 22288.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Hadow to Henderson. 11 May, 1938. FO 800/ 269; Lammers, 'Fascism', p. 74.
[476] Minute by Jebb.11 June, 1938. FO 371/ 22288.

State, as well as by a number of British diplomats abroad, including Eric Phipps.[477] Sargent perceived the Soviet government as champions of Communist expansion, and feared that its collaboration with western powers, such as Britain, but especially France, would ultimately lead to war from which only the Soviet Union would benefit.[478] Eric Phipps outlined his prejudices in correspondence with Duff Cooper. 'Bolshevism', he wrote at the end of 1938,

> ...is no doubt a bogey in our still, relatively happy island. On the continent it seems to be made of more solid substance...France, ever since the Left elections of May 1936, has suffered from strikes openly fermented by the Communists; nor did the imminence of the German danger prevent Moscow from pursuing this policy of disabling and even disarming its "ally." In Spain thousands of people have been murdered, in Russia millions. In Italy, Fascism would seem to have been directly due to Communism. In Germany Nazism was certainly partly to do with Communism.[479]

Hence, Phipps could 'never see why, if we hate all these horrors that Communism has caused or produced, we should imagine that an alliance with it is going to benefit us in any way.'[480]

Laurence Collier held a different opinion. In contrast to Jebb and others, his minutes indicate that he was not as opposed to, or afraid of, collaboration with Moscow. The reason for this was Collier's very different perception of Soviet Communism, and so, Soviet foreign policy intentions and capabilities. Collier had argued his beliefs regarding the Communist danger before. Between April - August 1937, Collier carried out long correspondence on the subject, first with a junior member of the British legation to the Holy See (P. I. H Torr) and then with a higher ranking official (of the British legation to the Holy See) Francis

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[477] For details of Henderson's views see *Chapter 6.*
[478] Minute by Sargent. 2 Jan, 1936. FO 371/ 19855; Michael Dockrill, *British Establishment Perspectives on France 1936 - 1940,* (New York, 1999), p. 14.
[479] Letter to Cooper from Phipps. 8 Dec, 1938. PHPPS 3/2. Phipps Papers.
[480] Ibid.

D'Aray Godolphin Osborne.[481] In 1938, Collier continued, with very little support from his colleagues, to represent the other side of the argument regarding cooperation with the Soviet government. Collier agreed with Jebb and others that world revolution remained the ultimate aim of Moscow in 1938. He also believed that Communism and Fascism were both 'intrinsically detestable in a high degree' and that both systems constituted 'very real dangers to the welfare of the British empire.'[482] However, and most importantly, Collier did not agree that the Soviet Union was the biggest threat facing Britain in the immediate future, or indeed, ultimately. As part of this belief, Collier explained that the Kremlin's recent enthusiasm for contacting outside governments was not due to revolutionary ambitions but because of growing concern about the future security of Soviet territory. He dismissed exaggerated, hysterical rumours of Soviet expansion.[483] Collier was sure that 'the dominant consideration' was 'the protection of the Union against attack.'[484] Moscow's ideological propaganda was no longer intended for foreign consumption and was in fact, he argued, having little effect upon left wing intellectuals in Britain.[485]

Essential to Collier's arguments concerning the Soviet Union was his belief that fascism was Britain's greatest threat. The head of the Northern Department had come to such a conclusion not by judging what was thought to be theoretically more dangerous, but by what he believed to be the more practical creed. Thus, the questions for the foreign office, he noted,

> ...are firstly, which of these creeds is in itself the more dangerous to British interests, and secondly, which is in fact likely to have most chance of affecting those interests; for it is clearly not enough to know that a

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[481] I shall not discuss Collier's minutes during 1937 at any length in this thesis since it has already been analysed in great detail by Lammers in his article, 'Fascism.' See, Lammers, 'Fascism', pp. 66-73.

[482] Minute by Jebb. 11 June, 1938. FO 371/ 22288.

[483] Minute by Collier. 26 July, 1938. FO 371/ 22287.

[484] Minute by Collier. 17 Feb, 1938. FO 371/ 22288.

[485] Minute by Collier. 8 Mar, 1938. FO 371/ 22286.

> doctrine is dangerous in itself - the really important thing is to know whether it can be put into practice.[486]

Collier admitted that 'Communism as a pure theory , is unalterably opposed to our interests...'[487] , but, he argued, it did not pose the greatest threat because its application, in reality, was not practical.

Fascism, or violent nationalism, Collier maintained, represented both the greatest short term, and long term, threat to the security of Britain. He disagreed with several points raised by Lascelles regarding the comparative threat of Germany and the Soviet Union. In his memorandum, Lascelles had argued that the German threat would eventually diminish because the ideal of nationalism within Germany would 'be modified in practice through force of circumstances.'[488] In contrast, he wrote, Marxism would 'inevitably prove the more effective propaganda in the long run.'[489] Collier responded by pointing out that it was, in fact, Communism that was more likely to weaken over time. 'All our reports', he argued,

> ...emphasise the growing deterioration of the whole Russian state machine under Stalin's present regime and the unlikelihood that it will ever become efficient enough to be dangerous unless that regime is fundamentally modified. Russia under Stalinite Communism...is becoming less and less of a menace... and it seems probable that she can only become a menace again by some fundamental alteration of that regime which might well rob it of its Communist character.[490]

Furthermore, he minuted,

> ...if we look at most European countries today, we find that what really appeals to the uneducated mass of the people is some form of violent nationalism - the "Iron Guard" in Rumania...seem to have an irresistible appeal, beside which Socialism and Communism, seems comparatively

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[486] Minute by Collier. 5 Apr, 1938. FO 371/ 22288.
[487] Minute by Collier. 11 June, 1938. Ibid.
[488] Ibid.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Ibid.

drab and unexciting.[491]

What Collier's writings show is that, although he disliked and distrusted the Soviet government, and Communism, he was willing to overlook such opinions and judge objectively which country represented the biggest threat to Britain. This was, after all, what was surely of most importance during this period.

There were other minor differences of opinion between Collier and other official commentators about the Soviet Union. The head of the Northern Department, for example, noted the Soviet regime's political stability as a positive attribute.[492] He also acknowledged the valuable resources within the Soviet Union. Thus, in a minute in which Collier criticised those who wished for a German - Soviet war, the official warned of the dire consequences of a German seizure of Soviet resources;

> Some people here look forward to that almost with equanimity as likely to keep Hitler and Stalin both occupied in fighting each other for a long time to come; but I fear it is more likely that the Germans... would achieve something like a conquest of Russia, or at least a protectorate over her, which, however superficial and impermanent it might prove to be in the long run, might well enable them to control Russian resources at the critical period of their relations with us.[493]

Yet it was Collier's belief that the Soviet Union and Communism posed less of a threat to Britain than fascism which represented the most significant divide between him and many others within the Foreign Office, and indeed the cabinet. Collier did oppose collaboration with the the Soviet government over the Czech crisis in Particular[494], but this was not surprising. It was, understandably, very difficult for members of the British political elite to trust Moscow's reliability completely, despite their efforts to overlook such

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[491] Ibid; Collier reiterated his beliefs in a more detailed memorandum required by Lancelot Oliphant, deputy Under Secretary in the Northern Department, in August. Lammers, 'Fascism', pp. 73-75; Memorandum by Collier.16 Aug, 1938. FO 371/22289.

[492] Minute by Collier. 7 Dec, 1938. FO 371/ 22301.

[493] Ibid.

[494] Minute by Collier. 22 June, 1938. FO 371/ 22288.

prejudices. Some contradiction in their remarks was, therefore, likely. Collier, however, did not want the Soviet Union diplomatically excluded altogether, and indeed made a number of comments suggesting that he was not as opposed to improving Anglo-Soviet relations in the future as others were.[495]

William Strang, a Foreign Office official who had worked in the Moscow embassy in the past and was later to become head of the Central Department, also opposed the deliberate exclusion of the Soviet Union in 1938. He told the British ambassador in Berlin, Nevile Henderson, that 'keeping Russia out of Europe altogether' was 'not an aspect of German policy which we wish to encourage.'[496] Collier's greatest support during this period, however, came from the Chief Diplomatic Adviser, Sir Robert Vansittart.[497] Indeed, Vansittart was, during this period, the most outspoken and fervent supporter of Anglo-Soviet collaboration within the foreign office. [498] It is not surprising then that he opposed the exclusion of the Soviet Union throughout the months leading to the Munich conference. In September, he wrote to Halifax insisting that there was no justification for the decision to include Italy yet exclude the Soviet Union in the proposed conference to be held in Munich. 'I am strongly opposed to the idea of summoning a Four Power Conference in present circumstances', he wrote. 'It would be the thin end of the wedge for driving Russia out of Europe...'[499] Furthermore, 'It can be supported on no adequate ground', he argued. 'Indeed there is far more ground for the presence of Russia than of Italy seeing that three-quarters of the population of Czechoslovakia are Slav.'[500]

[495] Minute by Collier. 11 June, 1938. Ibid.
[496] Lewis B. Namier, *In the Nazi Era*, p. 162; M. Gilbert and R. Gott, *Appeasers*, p. 136.
[497] John. R. Ferris, 'Indulged in All Too Little?: Vansittart, Intelligence and Appeasement', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. VI, (1995); M. L. Roi, 'From the Stresa Front to the Triple Entente: Sir Robert Vansittart, the Abyssinian Crisis and the Containment of Germany', Ibid.
[498] Brian McKercher, 'Old diplomacy and new: the Foreign Office and foreign policy, 1919 - 1939', in Michael Dockrill and Brian McKercher, *Diplomacy and World Power*, (Cambridge, 1996) , p. 112; Eric Phipps Telegram 205. 26 Mar, 1938. Minute by Vansittart. FO 371/ 21612; Dockrill, *British establishment*, pp. 96-7.
[499] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 92-3. Cited in Colvin, *Vansittart*, p. 248.
[500] Ibid.

Admittedly, Vansittart had ignored the fact that Italy was a signatory of the treaty of Versailles and that the Soviet Union was not. Nevertheless, his point regarding Soviet affiliation to the Slavs living in Czechoslovakia was an important one. Hitler's demand for the cessation of the Sudetenland was based entirely upon Germany's affiliation with the Germans living in the Sudetenland.

After Munich, Vansittart continued to urge better relations with the Soviets, not only from the British but also from the French and Polish governments.[501] The reason for this, and indeed for Vansittart's continued support of Anglo - French - Soviet collaboration throughout Chamberlain's premiership, was twofold. First, Vansittart was convinced of Germany's aggressive ambitions. According to Anthony Eden, he 'clearly saw the growing military power and political ambition of Nazi Germany as the principal danger.'[502] At the beginning of 1938, Vansittart was convinced Hitler's ambition involved taking all of eastern Europe.[503] In September, he warned that Germany, 'not content with having dismembered Czechoslovakia' would ' wish to do the same to Poland...'[504]

Vansittart's opinion of Germany was inextricably linked to his perception of the Soviet Union. Thus his recognition of Germany's aggressive ambitions had persuaded him that the Soviet Union no longer posed the greatest threat to stability in Europe. On 13 September he minuted;

> If the German spirit were fundamentally changed, there would be no objection to any form of conference or pact which tended to a solution of any specific question. But that spirit has *not* changed. In fact every hour that we live demonstrates more clearly that it is Germany, not Russia, that threatens the physical existence of every country and of its

[501] Minute by Vansittart. FO 371/ 22915. Cited in Dockrill, *British establishment,* p. 126; Colvin, *Vansittart,* p. 284. Vansittart's comments on a secret meeting held on 7 Dec, 1938.
[502] Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators,* (London, 1962), pp. 242-3.
[503] Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters, 1930-1939,* (New York, 1943), pp. 329-30. 9 Sept, 1938.
[504] Ibid; For more information on Vansittart's opinion of Germany see, Ferris, 'Vansittart', p. 139; p. 148.

individual citizens.[505]

Indeed, in Vansittart's opinion, the allegiance of the Soviet government now represented a decisive factor in the resistance of future aggression. Its military and strategical attributes would provide a crucial counterweight to both the Japanese[506] and the Germans.[507] 'It would be folly', he warned, 'to assist Germany in driving off the map an associate whose weight we may need.'[508]

If the Soviet government was, on the other hand, to come to an agreement with Berlin, the consequences would be disastrous and the balance of power would move decisively in Germany's favour. In 1938, Vansittart was one of few who believed that a German-Soviet rapprochement was possible. [509] He believed that Moscow would either voluntarily conclude an agreement with Berlin as a result of its continued exclusion by the western powers, or, that Germany would take advantage of the Soviet Union's isolation and invade, setting up a puppet regime. Consequently, the inclusion of the Soviet government, especially in any settlement of the Sudetenland crisis, was, he urged, the only way to prevent such a potentially devastating occurrence.[510]

Vansittart's recognition of Moscow's influence upon the defeat of aggression in the future persuaded him to suppress any anti-Soviet feelings he possessed. Vansittart was not a supporter of the Soviet regime and like his colleagues opposed the ideas of Soviet Communism[511] During the mid-1930s, Vansittart had expressed fear and his condemnation of what he perceived to be Comintern

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[505] VNST 2/39 Minutes. 13 Sept, 1938. Vansittart's Papers. Churchill College, Cambridge University.

[506] McKercher 'Old diplomacy', p. 112.

[507] Minute by Vansittart. FO 371/ 21612. Cited in Dockrill, *British establishment,* pp. 96-7.

[508] Colvin, *Vansittart,* p. 249.

[509] Chilston to Collier. 24 Jan, 1938. no. 467. D.B.F.P., II, XIX; Though Moscow did look towards Germany during 1937, Chilston had reported that relations remained too strained to allow any political rapprochement between the two governments. See, Chilston to Eden. 2 Nov, 1937. doc 178. D.F.A., 2, A; Haslam, *Collective Security,* pp. 125-127.

[510] Colvin, *Vansittart,*, p. 284.

[511] Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat,* (London, 1978), p. 229.

infiltration in France and Spain.[512] Nonetheless, he was, like Collier, willing to put aside such views in 1938 and recognise Britain's need of the Soviet Union. His realisation of the possible consequences if the Soviet Union was excluded had opened Vansittart's eyes to the reality of the Soviet position and its potential importance. This was 'realpolitik.' Unfortunately for Czechoslovakia, it was not the outlook adopted by those in the cabinet during most of 1938.

As a result of his internal policy, Stalin did much to undermine his foreign policy and, in particular, his attempts to ensure friendly relations with the West. The purges horrified Foreign Office officials in Moscow and London. Soviet citizens were suffering and, as far as officials were concerned, Soviet military and economic efficiency was also, consequently, deteriorating. Reports about the potential of the Soviet armed forces were particularly negative and the military weakness emphasised by attachés was cited by cabinet members as a reason not to collaborate with the Soviets over the Czech crisis. Two points, however, need to be made concerning perceptions of Soviet military potential and their influence upon attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration during this period. First, it is noteworthy that although reports about the condition of the Soviet armed forces were largely negative, a number of important positive points were also made. Through its ability to fight a defensive war, the Soviet Union could provide a second front, for example. Furthermore, Captain Clanchy had made several comments about the strength of the Soviet navy. Second, what reports from Moscow and minutes in Whitehall also show is that, just as apparent Soviet military weakness was not the main reason for the Cabinet's opposition to Anglo-Soviet collaboration in 1938, nor was it at the root of the opposition that existed to Anglo-Soviet collaboration within the Foreign Office. Distrust dictated the opposition that existed towards cooperation with the

[512] Vansittart to Clerk. 10 June, 1936. FO 371 / 19857; Minute by Vansittart.11 Nov, 1936. FO 371 / 20547; Cited in Ibid, p. 297; p. 305.

Soviets. All looked at in this chapter harboured a distrust of the Soviet government. Those in Moscow whose task it was to provide London with information about the Soviet Union were more reserved in their reporting. Yet, despite insufficient evidence, the ambassador and his officials still supposed that Moscow would not act to defend its ally. In Whitehall, officials who evidently did not feel compelled to hide their personal opinions of the Soviet Union revealed where such distrust actually stemmed from. Thus, their minutes confirmed the continuing influence of historical ideological prejudice against Soviet Communism. Some supported closer Anglo-Soviet relations during this period, namely Laurence Collier and Robert Vansittart. They were equally horrified by the purges, and opposed to Communism. Each had had some doubts about Soviet intentions or reliability. However, like the anti-appeasers, both spoke of putting aside prejudices. Unfortunately, like members of the Cabinet, the majority of those in the Foreign Office were not yet willing to do this.

Chapter Four:

Attitudes of the 'Anti-Appeasers' towards the Soviet Union, May 1937 - March 1939.

Throughout 1938, the British government's policy was one of deliberately excluding the Soviet Union from international affairs. This reflected primarily an unwillingness of certain ministers to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices. Further evidence to support this contention can be found in a detailed examination of the attitudes of those collectively referred to elsewhere as the 'anti-appeasers.'[513] Attitudes towards the Soviet Union amongst these politicians did vary. In addition, certain politicians were more willing than others to speak out in favour of collaboration with Moscow. Of those that did speak out, there were differences in the form of collaboration they supported. Indeed, a close analysis of the anti- appeasers highlights the complexity of attitudes that existed towards the Soviet Union and Anglo-Soviet relations. It reveals the difficulties politicians faced when deciding their position on foreign policy. Despite their negative perceptions of the Soviet Union, however, these politicians opposed the government's policy towards Moscow. Through such opposition they not only stressed the necessity of putting aside anti-Soviet prejudices, but illustrated just how possible it was for contemporary politicians and officials to do so.

During the first eight months of Chamberlain's premiership, the Soviet Union, Leopold Amery recalled, 'hardly came into the picture.'[514] The Spanish civil war no longer dominated discussions. Resentment regarding the repudiation of Russian debts from 1918, trade, and Comintern propaganda were raised within

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[513] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers*.

[514] Amery, *My Political Life.*, p. 227. Leopold Amery's papers are deposited at Churchill College, Cambridge University, but are currently closed to researchers.

the House of Commons, but there existed little reason to discuss Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration in particular. The crisis mounting in the Czech Sudetenland, however, enabled the Soviet government to demand its inclusion in collective action and diplomacy. In March, Litvinov had proposed a conference of the major powers to discuss resistance to further aggression in Europe[515] , and soon after this, politicians such as Winston Churchill began to openly propose a policy of collaboration with the French and Soviets in defence of Czechoslovakia. Thus, it is primarily from April 1938 onwards that this chapter will look at the attitudes of the anti-appeasers towards the Soviet Union and Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration.

The government's policy of deliberately excluding the Soviet Union from international diplomacy, especially concerning the settlement of the Sudetenland crisis, was recognised and criticised by the anti-appeasers. One of the most openly critical was the Labour M.P. Hugh Dalton.[516] He believed that Chamberlain's Cabinet were deliberately cold-shouldering the Soviet government during 1938.[517] 'There are some in this country', he told the House of Commons, 'who apparently think it worth while and a good bargain to try and push the Soviet Union out of Europe...'[518] He told Robert Vansittart, that ' it was amazing how some people, otherwise intelligent, had made a fixation about Russia and seemed almost to prefer that this country should be defeated in war without Russian aid rather than win with it.'[519] The leader of the Liberals, Archibald Sinclair, held a similar perception of the government's policy towards Moscow. 'I believe that it will be disastrous to try to exclude Russia from

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[515] CAB 27/627 58 mtg. 21 Mar, 1938.
[516] Dalton had been Under Secretary of State for the Foreign Office during the Labour government between 1929 - 1931.
[517] Dalton, *Memoirs* , p. 193; Col. 143. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[518] Ibid. Col. 142.
[519] Diary entry. 17 Sept, 1938. 1/19/27. Dalton Papers.

Europe...', he told the Prime Minister.[520] Even Leopold Amery, a Conservative M.P., hitherto one of the leading isolationist-imperialists, who had urged the government to strengthen the bonds of the empire and avoid continental entanglements[521] , believed a 'fundamental mistake' of the Prime Minister during this period was 'his refusal to take Russia into his confidence.'[522]

After Munich, politicians reiterated, and indeed increased, their accusations and criticisms of the deliberate exclusion of the Soviet Union from international affairs. Sinclair repeated his fear; 'His Majesty's Government', he warned, ' will be making a disastrous mistake if they go on truckling to Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini and leave Russia standing outside, on the mat.'[523] He was joined by a fellow Liberal and former Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, who complained that the British government had deliberately 'kept Russia out of it [the settlement of the Sudetenland crisis], although she was more directly interested in this matter than even this country.'[524] He thought the government's snubbing of the Soviet Union had been 'supreme diplomatic imbecility.'[525] Clement Attlee[526], leader of the Labour party, similarly condemned the fact that the Soviet government 'were never brought into consultation, except on one occasion, and that was when it looked as if things were coming to the worst, and their help was wanted.'[527]

Evidently unhappy with Chamberlain's opposition to Soviet involvement in the Czech crisis and thereafter in the resistance to future aggression, these

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[520] Col. 959. 21 June, 1938. 337 HC Deb 5s.
[521] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers*, p. 162.
[522] Nicolson, *Diaries* , pp. 1178-1179.
[523] Col. 74. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[524] Col. 2548. 19 Dec, 1938. 342 Ibid.
[525] Speech at Llandudno. 19 Jan, 1939. G/130. Lloyd George Papers.
[526] Though leader of the Labour party, Clement Attlee said and wrote comparatively little about the Soviet Union during Chamberlain's premiership. His private papers, at the Bodleian library, Oxford University, contain no reference to the Soviet Union during this period.
[527] Col. 58. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.

individuals called for some form of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration. What form of collaboration they supported and exactly what role they envisaged for the Soviet Union, however, differed somewhat. Amongst Conservative M.P.s, Winston Churchill was the most fervent and outspoken advocate of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration during 1938.[528] Although he had remained relatively quiet on the issue of collective security during the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and the Spanish civil war, from April 1938 onwards, Churchill began his public campaign for a grand alliance.[529] He wanted an alliance to include Britain, France and the Soviet Union and which, in the event of armed aggression, would militarily act in order to defend the victim. He did not think the government should accept all of the terms demanded by Moscow; 'we should certainly not go cap in hand to Soviet Russia', he told the House of Commons. But he did want the Soviet government as an ally against aggression. On 15 March, Churchill's 'Grand Alliance' speech proposed an offensive-defensive alliance including France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, backed by staff arrangements and the moral backing of the League. He explained; 'If that were sustained, as it would be, by the moral sense of the world, and if it were done in the year 1938-and, believe me, it may be the last chance there will be for doing it - then I say you might even now arrest this approaching war.'[530] It was, in his opinion, absolute folly, moreover self-defeating, not to cooperate with Moscow at such a crucial time. Churchill told an audience in Manchester on 9 May; '...how improvidently foolish we should be when dangers are so great, to put needles barriers in the way of the general association of the great Russian

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[528] For a detailed analysis of Churchill's views upon appeasement and his alternative proposals regarding a 'grand alliance' , see Parker, *Appeasement*. Parker contends that Churchill and a grand alliance could have prevented the Second World War. For an opposing view, see Charmley , *Chamberlain*; Ibid, *Churchill* .

[529] My interpretation of various speeches by Churchill during 1938 differs from that of David Carlton who argues that Churchill 'stuck to relatively vague demands for preparations for collective action under the auspices of the League - with only France openly envisaged as a leading potential partner for Great Britain.' See, David Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union*, (Manchester, 2000), p. 61.

[530] Cols. 99 - 100. 14 Mar, 1938. 333 HC Deb 5s.

mass with resistance to an act of Nazi aggression.'[531] Thus, he remained convinced until the end of September, that there existed 'still one good chance of preserving peace', and so urged that a

> ...solemn warning should be presented to the German government in joint or simultaneous notes by Great Britain, France and Russia, that the invasion of Czechoslovakia at the present juncture would be taken as an act of war against these powers.[532]

Robert Boothby, a close friend of Churchill's, also supported such an alliance. Frequently writing of his support for Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration in the press, as well as in private correspondence, Boothby outlined exactly what he wanted with regard to foreign policy in an article for the Daily Telegraph, published in March. He proposed 'a defensive alliance between those states which are determined,...,to resist aggression with all the means in their power.' The basis of the alliance, he explained, 'must be France, Britain and Russia.' Boothby stressed that it 'would be in no respect an offensive alliance.' Instead it 'would come into action only in the event of the armed invasion of Czechoslovakia.'[533]

Both Boothby and Churchill found sound arguments and support for their proposals in the private memoranda circulated by Captain Basil Liddell Hart, defence correspondent for the Times, and unofficial adviser to Leslie Hore-Belisha Secretary of State for War. Although he was essentially a proponent of limited liability and opposed a continental commitment on Britain's part,[534] between 1938-1939, Liddell Hart maintained contact with several politicians

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[531] "The Choice for Europe." An address given in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, 9 May, 1938. Cited in Randolph Churchill, ed., *Into Battle - Speeches by the Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill,* (London, 1941), p. 19.

[532] Winston S. Churchill. Press Statement. 26 September, 1938. (Churchill Papers: 9/132). Cited in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill. Companion 1936 - 1939,* Vol. 5. Part 3, (London, 1982), p. 1177.

[533] Letter to the Daily Telegraph. 19 March,1938.G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.

[534] Brian Bond, *Liddell Hart. A study of his military thought,* (London, 1977), p. 88; p. 90; p. 111.

looked at in this chapter regarding the issue of Soviet involvement in the resistance of future aggression.[535] Despite the publication of his articles being censored by the fervently pro-appeasing editor of the Times , Geoffrey Dawson, Liddell Hart also published several articles in favour of Soviet involvement in the resistance to aggression, not only in the Times but also in the Sydney Morning Herald. Writing such articles and circulating such memoranda whilst personally still averse to a continental commitment was one of many paradoxes in Liddell Hart's writings. Yet it can be explained. Although inclined towards isolationism, Liddell Hart did not support Chamberlain's appeasement policy. Rather, like several of the anti-appeasers looked at in this chapter, Liddell Hart supported a policy of bluff, 'running the risk of war for the sake of peace.'[536] During the 1930s, he had supported a policy of collective security with Britain's contribution limited to its conditions and resources. Thus, when friction mounted surrounding the Czech Sudetenland, particularly after the May crisis, Liddell Hart appeared persuaded of the importance of collective resistance, including not only British forces[537] , but also Soviet forces. Observing the international situation, especially strategic considerations, Liddell Hart wrote of the need for collaboration with the Soviets. In June, 1938, for example, in an article entitled , 'The Czechs' Cause - Call for British Stand-Danger of "Buying Peace", he explained that a 'settlement that spelt the exclusion of Russia's forces from the balance, while establishing Germany's domination of Czechoslovakia, would be a very bad bargain, strategically, for the ultimate settlement of Europe.'[538]

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[535] Memoranda circulated by Liddell Hart can be found in numerous collections of private papers, such as those of Boothby and Churchill; Ibid., p. 111, nb. 35.
[536] Alex Danchev, Alchemist of War. The Life of Basil Liddell Hart, (London, 1998), p.203.
[537] Ibid., pp. 90 - 112.
[538] Liddell Hart Papers. Kings College Archives. Reference. LH 10/1938/50. 'The Czechs' cause - Call for British Stand - Danger of "Buying Peace." By Captain B.C. Liddell Hart. In the *Sydney Morning Herald*. 14 June, 1938.

One of many politicians who also received memoranda from Liddell Hart, was the Conservative M.P. Harold Macmillan. He, too, supported collaboration with the Soviets. By the end of 1937, the aggressive acts of Hitler and Mussolini had persuaded Macmillan of 'the most urgent need of Britain...to draw in as her allies in the cause of peace the two great nations in the West and the East - the United States and Russia.'[539] In an article written for the Northern Echo on 18 March, Macmillan called for collaboration with the French and Soviets, if Whitehall intended to make the invasion of Czechoslovakia a reason for going for war.[540] In The Times, he openly supported groups such as 'The New Commonwealth', who wrote of the increasing threat of German expansion and called for a 'reversion to the policy of collective security.'[541] After Munich, he expressed his support for an alliance in a private but widely circulated pamphlet entitled 'The Price of Peace.'[542] By the winter of 1938 - 1939, Macmillan's support for Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration had strengthened. Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration, in his opinion, could help preserve peace, and if peace could not be preserved, then Soviet assistance would be crucial in the event of war.

Leopold Amery agreed that peace could only be secured through the involvement of the Soviet Union in a policy of collective resistance.[543] At a meeting on 26 September, first at General Sir Edward Spear's office, and then in Churchill's flat, Amery discussed with other politicians including the Liberal M.P., Lloyd George, the President of the League of Nations Union, Lord Robert Cecil and Archibald Sinclair, the importance of 'bringing Russia into the

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[539] Macmillan, *Winds of Change* ,p. 529; p. 549

[540] Ibid., p. 543.

[541] Letter to Macmillan from Lord Davies of 'The New Commonwealth.' 24 March, 1939. MS Macmillan dep. c. 131. Macmillan Papers. Bodleian Library, Oxford University. Macmillan's papers have been severely weeded. There are no diaries in the collection for the period 1937 - 1939. Only correspondence with his constituents survive.

[542] Macmillan, *Winds of Change* , p. 584.

[543] Col. 204. 3 Oct, 1938.339 HC Deb 5s.

picture.' Amery himself was 'all for pressing the government privately on this...'[544] He appreciated that it 'was not only the Western powers that were concerned about Czechoslovakia. In Russian eyes it was an outpost and bastion of Slavdom...the key to the whole strategic situation in Central Europe, not lightly to be surrendered into the hand of the declared enemy.'[545] Yet, Amery found it very difficult to openly oppose the government's policy and campaign for closer Anglo-French-Soviet relations. The reason for this was threefold. Firstly, the isolationist imperialist stance he had previously held naturally opposed continental entanglements, including cooperation with the Soviets over the crisis in eastern Europe. Secondly, and more relevant to this thesis, Amery had to reconcile Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration with the anti-Soviet prejudices he held.[546] Thirdly, Amery faced a dilemma many Conservatives faced during this period, namely, whether to openly rebel against the leader of the party. He noted of his meeting with Churchill and others that 'they also wished for some public declaration by us, as Conservatives, that we stood for cooperation with Russia, to which I strongly objected.'[547] Amery admitted in his diary that he could not speak out against Chamberlain because he felt there would be little support for such a proposal from fellow Conservative back benchers.[548]

Anthony Eden's behaviour regarding his support of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration also reflected this dilemma.[549] Thus, he, too, did not speak openly about his opinion regarding Soviet involvement in the settling of the Sudetenland crisis before the Munich conference. Indeed, despite privately agreeing with Churchill and others on the issue of Anglo-French-Soviet

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[544] Amery, *My Political Life,* p. 278.
[545] Ibid., p. 262.
[546] See discussion below regarding Amery's personal aversion to the Soviet Union.
[547] Leopold Amery. Diary Entry. 26 September, 1938. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill,* pp. 1179-80.
[548] Ibid.
[549] David Dutton, *Anthony Eden: A Life and Reputation,* (London, 1997), p. 136.

collaboration, the former Foreign Secretary refused to sign a telegram to be sent to the Prime Minister on 29 September warning him not to betray the Czechs. Churchill proposed the telegram and Sinclair and Robert Cecil, amongst others, agreed to sign. But Eden refused 'on the grounds that it would be interpreted as a vendetta against Chamberlain.'[550] Throughout 1938 Eden had shown remarkable loyalty to Chamberlain. He had refused to capitalise on the seizure of Austria earlier in the year, evidently a failure of appeasement policy. Instead, he chose to stay away from Westminster for two months following the Anschluss.[551] Eden remained hopeful that he could reenter the cabinet at some stage. Despite his political ambitions and loyalty to Neville Chamberlain, however, Eden did want the British government to collaborate with Moscow. He had favoured closer Anglo-Soviet diplomatic relations since 1935.[552] In the Spring of 1935, Eden had been the first British minister to visit the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 , and following this he maintained contact with the Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky.[553] Indeed both the Soviet ambassador and Lord Cranbourne, Eden's Parliamentary Under Secretary before his resignation in February 1938, perceived the former Foreign Secretary to be in favour of Anglo-Soviet rapprochement.[554] Though not in favour of the formation of military blocs with Britain and the Soviet Union on one side and Germany on the other, during the autumn of 1937, Eden nevertheless had worked to prevent the isolation of the Soviet government from international diplomacy.[555] Moreover, though he was not its most outspoken member, he was still a member of the group known as the 'Glamour Boys' which met informally

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[550] Harold Nicolson. Diary entry. 29 September, 1938. Cited in, Nicolson, *Diaries* , pp. 371-372.
[551] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers*, p. 161.
[552] CAB 24/253 C.P. 41. Cited in, D. Dutton, *Eden,* p. 42.
[553] Letter to Eden from Maisky. 4 Oct, 1938. AP 13/1/66. Anthony Eden Papers. Birmingham University Archives.
[554] Maisky, *Who Helped Hitler,* p. 71.
[555] Eden to Chilston. 27 Oct, 1937. no. 271; Eden to Chilston. 18 Oct, 1937. no. 252. D.B.F.P., II, Vol. XIX.

to discuss foreign affairs, including the role of the Soviet Union.[556] He eventually expressed his opinion on the issue openly following the Munich conference. There was, he argued in the House of Commons in October, 'no sufficient cause for seeking to organise Europe on such a basis that excludes any great power, nor do I believe you can secure the lasting peace of Europe on such a basis.'[557] Eden did not refer to the Soviet Union by name, but his implication was obvious.

A close associate and a former private secretary of Anthony Eden, Oliver Harvey, also supported collaboration with the Soviets during this period. As the private secretary of the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, Harvey could hardly become involved in the unofficial meetings of politicians regarding foreign affairs. Neither, as a civil servant, could he openly air his opinion about foreign policy during this period. Yet, Harvey's diary reveals his personal interest in the position of the Soviet Union in international affairs throughout Chamberlain's premiership. Indeed, his views were not dissimilar to those of Churchill's and the other anti-appeasers. Thus, he too, opposed Chamberlain's exclusion of the Soviet government and believed that the best settlement for the Czechoslovakian crisis involved the Soviet Union.[558] During the winter of 1938-1939, Harvey called for closer Anglo-French-Soviet relations in particular. He 'urged the need', for example, for both the French and British governments to 'warm up their relations with Russia...'[559]

Members of the Labour party made similar statements of support for the involvement of the Soviet Union in the settling of the Sudetenland crisis. During

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[556] Anthony Eden, *The Reckoning*, (London, 1965), pp. 31-32; Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers*, pp. 167-8; For further discussion of such groups see, *Introduction.*
[557] Col. 86. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[558] Harvey *Diplomatic Diaries*, p.132. 25-26 April, 1938.
[559] Ibid., pp. 250-251. 6 February, 1938.

1938, both Attlee and Arthur Greenwood[560] said relatively little about foreign affairs and the Soviet Union, in particular. Each suffered periods of illness and so were absent from the House of Commons. Still, when they did speak on the subject, they, too, called for closer Anglo-French-Soviet relations. In April, for example, Greenwood voiced his support for Litvinov's recent proposal of a conference to discuss collective resistance.[561] After Munich, Attlee himself called for a conference to establish the future peace of Europe, and emphasised the need to invite Soviet representatives.[562]

The most passionate supporter of closer Anglo-Soviet relations in the Labour party, however, was Hugh Dalton. Hugh Dalton, although in favour of collaboration between London and Moscow in 1938, did not want diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union necessarily at the exclusion of Germany. Rather, Dalton wanted 'a system of mutual guarantee against aggression in Europe.' Thus, if the Soviet Union attacked Nazi Germany, Dalton was willing to defend Germany against aggression. But, at the same time, he wanted the British government to assure it would side with the Soviet Union, and others, if threatened by German forces.[563] As the Czechoslovakian crisis heightened and Germany's aggressive intentions became increasingly evident, Dalton and the Labour party wanted collaboration with the Soviets against German aggression. On 8 September, at the Trade Union Congress in Blackpool, the Labour Party National Executive issued a statement, agreed by the T. U. C. , which demanded that the 'British Government must leave no doubt in the mind of the German Government that they will unite with the French and Soviet Governments to resist any attack on Czechoslovakia...'[564] Dalton soon after pointed out to the

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[560] Greenwood's private papers, deposited at the Bodleian library, Oxford University, contain no commentary upon the Soviet Union during Chamberlain's premiership.
[561] Col. 53. 4 April, 1938. 334 HC Deb 5s.
[562] Col. 65. 3 Oct, 1938. 339. Ibid.
[563] Diary entry. 13 July, 1938. 1/19/23. Dalton Papers.
[564] Dalton, *Memoirs*, p. 174.

Prime Minister; 'Is it not a clear calculation,..., that if it can be shown in advance that there would be a combined force annoyed against an aggressor, which would include the Soviet Union, we should be much more likely to avoid war?'[565]

Examining the public speeches and private papers of Hugh Dalton provides sufficient evidence to dismiss the contention of A. J. P. Taylor, namely, that Labour M.P.s could and did call for an alliance with the Soviet Union because they knew that this was something that a Conservative Prime Minister would never contemplate.[566] The anti-appeasers were not insincere 'troublemakers'. The sincerity of Dalton's proposals was clear. The repeated attacks upon government policy in the House of Commons and the personal demands made to individual ministers, reflected a genuine hope that Chamberlain would change his mind.

Other politicians that joined such efforts to persuade the Prime Minister to accept Soviet proposals of collaboration included the National Labour M.P, Harold Nicolson, Archibald Sinclair and Lloyd George. Like several M.P.s during this period, including Winston Churchill, Nicolson maintained a close relationship with the Soviet ambassador, Ivan Maisky, and frequently met him to discuss foreign affairs , in particular, Anglo-Soviet relations.[567] On 26 August, Nicolson noted in his diary that 'if Maisky can be induced to promise Russian support if we take a strong line over Czechoslovakia, the weak will of the Prime Minister may be strengthened.'[568] Nicholson wanted cooperation between London, Paris and Moscow regarding the defence of the Sudetenland. Indeed, only days before Chamberlain announced his visit to Munich, he visited the

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[565] Col. 142. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[566] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers*, (London, 1969), p. 191; p. 197.
[567] Nicolson, *Diaries* , p. 329. 7 March,1938; p. 356. 22 Aug, 1938.
[568] Ibid., pp. 357-8. 26 Aug, 1938.

Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, in order to persuade him to collaborate with the Soviets.[569]

Archibald Sinclair and Lloyd George were both unequivocal in their conviction that the Soviet Union ought to be included in the resistance of future aggression.[570] In private meetings, each had agreed to pressure the government to accept Soviet proposals of collaboration over the defence of Czechoslovakia.[571] Both chose to express their attitudes towards the Soviet Union in the House of Commons after Munich. Sinclair demanded Soviet inclusion in the guarantee of what remained of Czechoslovakia.[572] Only collaboration with the Soviet government, he said, could ensure peace in Europe.[573] Lloyd George, like Hugh Dalton, did not believe Anglo-Soviet relations had necessarily to be at the expense of Anglo-German relations.[574] But, he, too, wanted Moscow included in any guarantee of Czechoslovakia.[575]

Notably, Lloyd George, like most of the politicians looked at in this chapter, stressed the importance of deterrence in his calls for Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration. He told the House of Commons that closer Anglo-French-Soviet relations before September would have deterred Hitler and ensured the security of Czechoslovakia. 'Herr Hitler' he argued, 'if he had known there was a combination of that kind...against him if he took any aggressive line against Czechoslovakia, would never have taken any step...'[576] Churchill, Boothby and Dalton had hinted that they were prepared for military collaboration and war if

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[569] Ibid., p. 366. 23 Sept, 1938.
[570] Col. 959. 21 June, 1938. 337 HC Deb 5s.
[571] Harold Nicolson. Diary entry. 29 Sept,1938. Cited in, Nicolson, *Diaries* , pp. 371-2; Gilbert, *Churchill,* pp. 1178-1179.
[572] Col. 959. 21 June, 1938. 337 HC Deb 5s.
[573] Col. 2537. 19 Dec, 1938. 342 Ibid.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Col. 178. 9 Nov, 1938. 341 Ibid.
[576] Col. 2547. 19 Dec, 1938. 342 Ibid.

necessary, namely if Germany invaded Czechoslovakia.[577] However, each, firmly believed that war would be prevented if Britain, France and the Soviet Union allied. Nothing, Robert Boothby believed,

> ...is more likely to deter Herr Hitler from action which would certainly plunge the whole world into the miseries and homes of modern warfare than the knowledge that staff talks were now taking place between Britain, France and Russia; and that these powers would act together during the next few critical weeks while the fate of Europe is in the balance.[578]

The 'veto of France, Britain and Russia', Churchill wrote in September, 'would certainly prevent the disaster of war.'[579] At the time of the Czechoslovakia crisis, he argued after Munich, 'the German dictator was not deeply and irrevocably committed to his new adventure.'[580] Indeed, Churchill believed that the likelihood of war resulting from his own proposal to establish a 'grand alliance' prior to Munich, would have been far less than the potential for war now that Chamberlain's actions had compromised Britain's position.[581] This was in stark contrast to the conviction of many within the Cabinet, at least until May 1939, that collaboration with the Soviets would almost certainly increase the likelihood of the war.[582]

Churchill in particular, believed a threat of resistance would succeed because it would have 'given strength to all those forces in Germany which resisted this departure, this new design [an attack on Czechoslovakia].'[583] Lloyd George

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[577] Letter to the *Daily Telegraph.* 19 Mar, 1938. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers; Winston S. Churchill. Press Statement. 26 Sept, 1938. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 1177.
[578] Letter to the *Daily Telegraph.* 19 Mar, 1938. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.
[579] Winston Churchill to Ruchard Freund. 2 Sept, 1938. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill*, pp. 1139-40.
[580] 'The Munich Agreement'. A speech delivered in the House of Commons. 5 Oct, 1938. Cited in Churchill ed., *Into Battle*, p. 44.
[581] Winston S. Churchill to Sir Henry Page Croft. 29 Oct, 1938. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill,* pp. 1246-48.
[582] Col. 2537. 19 Dec, 1938. 342 HC Deb 5s.
[583] 'The Munich Agreement.' A speech delivered in the House of Commons. 5 Oct, 1938. Cited in Churchill ed., *Into Battle*, p. 44.

agreed that Hitler 'would not have been backed up by his army' who were, according to his sources, 'against it' and 'frightened of it.'[584] The main reason underlying the conviction amongst anti-appeasers that such a threat would have succeeded in preventing war, however, was the belief that Hitler's optimism about engaging in aggressive actions against countries such as Czechoslovakia was largely influenced by the British government's refusal to cooperate with Moscow. For example, Nicolson thought that 'Ribbentrop always says to Hitler, "You need never fear England until you find her mentioning Russia as an ally. Then it means she is really going to war."'[585] Even Henry Channon, M.P., a fervent supporter of Chamberlain, agreed that 'Hitler is too canny to risk a war, so long as there is a chance of French and Russian participation.'[586] Boothby, too, thought that Hitler's foreign policy, and his actions concerning the Sudetenland especially, had been largely influenced by the state of Anglo-Soviet relations. He told Lloyd George;

> There is no doubt whatever that Ribbentrop told Hitler that the British government was much more concerned about class interests than national interests; and that unless and until direct political and military contacts were established between the British and the Russians, he could rest assured that the British government did not mean business.[587]

Consequently, those who supported Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration were always 'desperately keen about pressing the Government to make clear that we were in direct touch with Russia in order to impress the Germans, who have taken our non-contact with Russia as a clear proof that we do not mean to go in...'[588]

These politicians were not, therefore, war mongers. Their reaction to the news

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[584] Col. 2547. 19 Dec, 1938. 342 HC Deb 5s.
[585] Nicolson, Diaries and Letters. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill,* pp. 1178-1179.
[586] Robert Rhodes James ed., *Chips. The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon,* (London, 1967), p. 163. 2 Sept, 1938.
[587] Memorandum from Boothby to Churchill. 1 Oct, 1938. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.
[588] Leopold Amery diary entry. 26 Sept, 1938. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill,* pp. 1179-80.

that Hitler had invited Chamberlain to Munich on 28 September confirmed this.[589] Clement Attlee and Archibald Sinclair, offered their congratulations and encouragement.[590] Attlee admitted, 'we all feel relief that war has not come this time.'[591] Harold Macmillan noted that he, too, 'shared - the general sense of relief. My son would stay at school and go to Oxford...'[592] Even Churchill shook Chamberlain's hand and congratulated the Prime Minister on his 'good fortune.'[593] No one had wanted to go to war in 1938.[594] Rather they had believed that only collaboration with the Soviets could prevent war. Consequently, when the terms of the Munich agreement were revealed and it became apparent that the West had merely surrendered to Hitler's threats, calls for Soviet involvement in the resistance to future aggression continued and even heightened.

Looking at all of the arguments and proposals put forward in 1938 by those collectively referred to as anti-appeasers it would be reasonable to say that there existed some ambiguity surrounding exactly what many of the Conservative and opposition members supported as an alternative policy to that of appeasement. The fact that several chose not to speak out in favour of collaboration in the House of Commons until after Munich, further illustrates the hesitancy that existed.[595] Nonetheless, it would not be a fair interpretation of the evidence to say that these politicians had no real substitute for Chamberlain's policy.[596] Churchill, Boothby and Hugh Dalton in particular, had spelt out their proposals

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[589] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers,* pp. 174-5.
[590] 28 Sept, 1938.339 HC Deb 5s.
[591] Col. 51. 3 Oct, 1938. Ibid.
[592] Macmillan, *Winds of Change,* p. 562.
[593] The *Times.* 29 Sept, 1938; Harold Nicolson. Diary entry. 28 Sept, 1938. Cited in, Nicolson, *Diaries* , p. 371.
[594] 28 Sept, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[595] Macmillan, *Winds of Change,* pp. 549-50.
[596] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers,* p. 172; p. 175.

in the clearest possible terms.[597] Furthermore, despite such vagueness in exactly what M.P.s proposed, it was obvious that each wanted the Soviet government to be far more involved in the resistance of aggression than it was, at present, being allowed to be. All agreed that Soviet representatives should be informed of developments and invited to conferences about Czechoslovakia. After Munich, they urged Chamberlain not to exclude the Soviet Union any longer, and in particular, to include Moscow in plans to secure the future of what remained of Czechoslovakia.

How can one explain such opposition to the government's policy towards the Soviet Union. Why did these individuals, in contrast to Chamberlain, so want Moscow to be involved in the resistance to aggression? Firstly, it is important to deal with two issues raised earlier in Chapter One, namely, attitudes towards Germany and the policy of appeasement, and the structural constraints facing the British government during this period. Thus, it can be suggested that the politicians looked at in this chapter were motivated in their support of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration by their perceptions of Hitler and their opposition to a policy of repeated conciliation, and that they were only able to pursue their support because of a deliberate ignorance of the structural constraints facing the government. These included Britain's military weakness, the opposition of the dominion and east European governments to Soviet involvement in the resistance of aggression, and the strategic difficulties their opposition created.

The politicians and officials looked at in this chapter did oppose Chamberlain's policy of conciliation. Amongst those at the forefront of the anti-appeasers, for example, was Major General Edward Spears, one of the founder members of the

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[597] Cols. 93-100; 14 Mar, 1938. 333 HC Deb 5s; Diary entry. 13 July, 1938. 1/19/23. Dalton Papers;Letter to the *Daily Telegraph.* 19 Mar, 1939. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.

December Club.[598] He had voiced his opposition to appeasement throughout the 1930s. As early as October 1937, Spears wanted to impress upon the Germans that Britain would go to war over the Czech Sudetenland.[599] In May 1938, he wrote to the Times calling for a British commitment on the continent.[600] Churchill had similarly vehemently opposed and criticised Chamberlain's foreign policy during 1938. On 15 September, for example, when the British press received news of Chamberlain's visit to Hitler, Winston claimed that it was 'the stupidest thing that has ever been done.'[601] He warned that

> ...the partition of Czechoslovakia under Anglo-French pressure amounts to a complete surrender by the Western democracies to the Nazi threat of force. Such a collapse will not bring peace or safety to Great Britain and France. On the contrary it will bring both the countries into a position of ever increasing weakness and danger.[602]

In his opinion, the Munich agreement and the cessation of the Sudetenland to Germany represented the ultimate failure of appeasement policy.[603]

Anthony Eden also opposed the government's 'policy of concession to violence.'[604] He supported Chamberlain's determination to avoid war, but disagreed on his methods and tactics, especially regarding the timing of the conciliation of the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini.[605] On 20 February, Eden had resigned from his post as Foreign Secretary because of his opposition to Chamberlain's attempt to secure Italian friendship. As the Czechoslovakian crisis heightened, he had become more and more pessimistic about

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[598] For a description of the different groups of 'anti-appeasers' see, *Introduction.*
[599] Egremont, *Spears,*, pp. 127-138; pp. 138-9. Spears' papers are deposited at Churchill College, Cambridge University. Ref SPRS.
[600] Ibid., p. 140.
[601] Oliver Harvey Diary. 15 Sept, 1938, p. 1162. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 1162.
[602] Winston Churchill Press Statement. 21 Sept, 1938. Cited in Ibid, pp. 1171-72.
[603] A. H. Richards to Sir Winston Churchill. 21 Dec, 1938. Cited in Ibid, pp. 1320-21.
[604] Robert Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden,* (London, 1986), p. 207.
[605] Parker, *Appeasement* , p. 95.

appeasement.[606] During the spring and summer, Eden increasingly opposed any further concessions to Hitler.[607] On 9 September, he tried to persuade the Foreign Secretary to issue a warning to the German dictator that war over Czechoslovakia would not be localised.[608]

Oliver Harvey agreed with his former chief. He believed the policy of conciliation had undermined Britain's role as the world's champion of democracy.[609] By the end of 1938, Chamberlain's policy, he wrote, was 'bankrupt.'[610] Lord Robert Cecil and Leopold Amery agreed. In a letter to Archibald Sinclair, Cecil wrote; 'I verily believe that Chamberlain's foreign policy is very dangerous.'[611] Leopold Amery had urged action to be taken against Hitler as early as March and the proclamation of the Anschluss.[612] By the end of year, he openly criticised the Prime Minister's policy in the House of Commons.[613] He reproached the decision makers for yielding 'to a stronger will and to a clearer judgment of our own nerve.'[614]

Again, concerns about remaining loyal to the Conservative leadership led politicians such as Amery to make contradictory statements regarding his attitude towards government foreign policy. In the same speech to the House of Commons, for example, Amery appealed to fellow politicians not to criticise the government; 'Least of all I am asking the House to blame the Prime Minister, who has had to face a terrible responsibility...'[615] What possibly persuaded such

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[606] Ibid., p. 101; Liddell Hart, *B. H. Liddell Hart. Memoirs,* Vol. II, (London, 1958), pp. 161-2.
[607] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers,* p. 168.
[608] Eden, *The Reckoning,* pp. 21-22; Col. 82. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[609] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 148. 5 June, 1938.
[610] Ibid., p. 232. 25 Dec, 1938.
[611] Letter to Archibald Sinclair from Robert Cecil. 31 Oct, 1938. No. 197. Add 51181. Lord Robert Cecil Papers. British Library Archives.
[612] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers,* pp. 162-3; Cols. 84-7. 14 Mar, 1938. 333. 340 HC Deb 5s.
[613] Col. 199. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 Ibid.
[614] Col. 203. Ibid.
[615] Col. 204. 3 Oct, 1938. Ibid.

politicians to leap to the defence of the government after the Munich conference were the attacks being unleashed by members of the opposition. Though traditionally an anti-war party, by 1937, the Labour party had also begun to criticise Chamberlain's foreign policy. Hugh Dalton was primarily responsible for this change. During the last sixteen months of peace, he personally went to great lengths to emphasise the dangers of appeasement. Like others, Dalton believed that offering Hitler concessions would not prevent war.[616] Arthur Greenwood supported Dalton, telling the House of Commons that Chamberlain's policy was 'not the way to peace.'[617] Nicholson, described appeasement as disastrous,[618] and was one of few who refused to stand and cheer on the announcement of Chamberlain's invitation to the Munich conference.[619]

Amongst the Liberals, Archibald Sinclair vented his opposition to appeasement vehemently. He told the House of Commons in July;

> The Prime Minister asks, are we to be plunged into war against our will? If those who threaten and trample on the rights of others are to be allowed to dominate and absorb the resources first of one country and then of another - Austria, Spain, China, Czechoslovakia and the Balkan countries, and if brute force proves irresistible, the answer is that we in our turn will inevitably have to chose between being plunged into war against our will or being reduced to...poverty and servitude.[620]

Sinclair's speeches, especially, revealed what underlay such opposition to the government's foreign policy. Namely, a realisation of Hitler's aggressive intentions, and consequently, an immense distrust of any assurances on his behalf. In contrast to Chamberlain, Sinclair argued that to rely upon the assurances of the dictators would be calamitous:

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[616] Ben Pimlott, *Hugh Dalton,* (London,1985), p. 225; p. 242; pp. 252-4.
[617] Col. 50. 4 April, 1938. 334 HC Deb 5s.
[618] Nicolson, *Diaries,* p. 329.
[619] Macmillan, *Winds of Change,* p. 559.
[620] Col. 2938. 26 July, 1938. 338 HC Deb 5s.

My profound mistrust of the Prime Minister's foreign policy is derived from a careful study of his speeches, from which it appears to me that he misconceives the world situation and misunderstands both the opinions of his opponents at home and the psychology of those two ruthless and formidable dictators (not reasonable and honourable, but misguided, gentlemen, as he appears to think.)[621]

In addition to their anti-appeasement stance, these M.Ps also appeared to ignore what members of the government and several historians since have highlighted as the structural constraints facing London during this period. Neither Dalton, Sinclair, Churchill, nor others who criticised the government for excluding the Soviet Union appeared to consider the genuine fear of Communist infiltration held by the nations of continental Europe. Robert Boothby, for example, assumed that the 'Great Powers' would be supported by 'other small European powers.'[622] Almost no consideration was given to the opinions of the dominions. Furthermore, one could argue that the anti-appeasers failed to appreciate the inherent contradiction between their proposals and Britain's military weaknesses. At the beginning of 1938, for example, Macmillan pointed out that, with the exception of Hugh Dalton, the Labour party and Liberals though all in favour 'for "standing up to the dictators" in principle, were still determined to reject the only practical means by which Britain's military power could be rapidly increased.'[623] Consequently, one could suggest, the proposals of the anti-appeasers were only possible because of their deliberate ignorance of the inherent difficulties facing Whitehall.

Yet, what in fact separated the anti-appeasers from the government was their

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[621] Col. 2527. 19 Dec, 1938. 342 Ibid.
[622] Letter to the *Daily Telegraph* by Robert Boothby. 19 Mar, 1938. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.
[623] Macmillan, *Winds of Change,* pp. 549-550.

belief that such military, strategical and political constraints were not the impossible obstacles that those who opposed closer Anglo-Soviet relations portrayed them to be. In contrast to Chamberlain and his supporters, for example, those outside the government did not accept that the opinions of certain governments were final and, more importantly, decisive. They were willing to at least try to persuade such governments of the need for their involvement in the resistance to aggression. Churchill, for example, believed that the Baltic States, the Scandinavian powers, as well as Poland, could all be persuaded to participate in collective resistance. On 9 May, 1938, Churchill explained to an audience in Manchester:

> There is Poland; and the countries of the north, the Baltic States, the Scandinavian Powers. If we had once gathered together the forces I have mentioned, we should then be in a position to offer these countries a very great measure of armed security for peace. At the present time they do not know which way to turn. But if they saw a strong, armed association, such as I have described, whose interest in peace was the same as theirs, they might easily be induced to throw in their lot with us and "make assurance double sure."'[624]

If such countries could not be enticed into joining a policy of collective security, then, Hugh Dalton explained, they would just have to be pressured. He emphasised the need to make both Poland and Rumania comply to efforts to ensure Soviet aid if necessary.[625] Liddell Hart pointed out that the British government could utilise the fact that Poland was, to some degree, reliant upon Britain, situated as it (Poland) was, between two hostile powers. Thus, in an article for the New Commonwealth Quarterly, he wrote that countries such as Poland needed reassurance from Britain and the West. Their behaviour and decisions were effectively in the hands of the British government.[626]

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[624] Richard Acland to Winston S. Churchill. 23 May, 1938. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill,* pp. 1038-39.

[625] Dalton, *Memoirs,* pp. 172-173.

[626] B. Liddell Hart, 'Military and Strategic Advantages of Collective Security in Europe', *New Commonwealth Quarterly,* (Sept, 1938). LH 10/1938/53b. Liddell Hart Papers.

In 1938 Poland wanted to seize Teschen from Czechoslovakia. That this was ignored by the anti-appeasers, as well as the opposition to Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration amongst the dominion governments, does show that, to some extent, those outside of government could and did overlook inconvenient facts about the difficulties inherent in involving the Soviet Union in a policy of collective resistance. Nevertheless, Churchill and others had proposed actions not considered or implemented by the British government, most notably, establishing an alliance as a means of deterrence. What this revealed was that whether London collaborated with Moscow or not was actually a matter of will, namely, whether politicians were willing to try and overcome such difficulties because of a genuine desire for Moscow's involvement. That it was, in fact, a matter of will was confirmed by the decision of most of the Cabinet to consider Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration at the end of September, despite the existence of such alleged obstacles.

Similarly, those that supported Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration, such as Churchill and Boothby, did not perceive Britain's military weakness to be the insurmountable barrier Chamberlain and others suggested. Several M.P.s did acknowledge it as a serious problem during 1938.[627] Churchill, Amery and Boothby had continually and openly urged rearmament.[628] Although the Labour party had previously voted against the defence estimates, it had joined Churchill and others in urging rearmament during the later months of 1938.[629] However, the primary reason these politicians did not accept Britain's military weakness as an obstacle to Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration was their sincere belief that Hitler's aggressive ambitions could be thwarted through a diplomatic warning, by a bluff. What if Hitler called the bluff and war broke out? Admittedly

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[627] Col. 204. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[628] Col. 123. 1 Nov, 1938. 340 Ibid.
[629] Pimlott, *Dalton*, pp. 253-4; Macmillan, *Winds of Change*, p. 567.

politicians including Churchill did not discuss this possibility in great detail, but it would be fair to assume from statements that a number of politicians believed that, together with an eastern front provided by the Soviet Union, the French and British could defeat Hitler. Churchill believed this, as did Macmillan. At the time, Macmillan thought Germany should have been militarily resisted over the Sudetenland. Later he reflected that Britain 'could hardly have been in so perilous a position as that which we had to face in the summer of 1940.' 'The armies of France would have been intact', he wrote. Furthermore,

> ...we should have had Germany facing two fronts - a west and an east - with Czechoslovakia and perhaps Poland to fight, and beyond them, Russia to fear. The Czechoslovak army was considerable and well armed. As regards the air, in spite of our weakness, the German bombers would have been at the disadvantage of having to attack from home stations...we might well have secured the support of Russia, who regarded Munich as a sign of the moral and material weakness of the West. The Dominions would doubtless have come along in due course once the die was cast.[630]

It is difficult to say whether Britain would have won a war during 1938. But, again, the fact that cabinet ministers themselves were prepared to contact Moscow with regard to military collaboration at the end of September suggests even they did not believe Britain's military status undermined resistance entirely.

Regarding the more plausible suggestion that perceptions of Germany and opposition to appeasement dictated such support for Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration, two points need to be made. Firstly, not all who proposed Soviet involvement held identical views of the German dictator, or, therefore, were necessarily opposed to negotiating with the dictators. Though he held contempt for Mussolini and detested Nazism, Lloyd George, for example, remained

[630] Ibid., p. 579.

'spellbound' by Hitler following his visit to Berlin in 1936.[631] After Munich, the former Prime Minister remained willing to accept negotiations between Britain and Germany, as long as Moscow was no longer excluded. He told the House of Commons on 9 November;

> ...we are neither Fascists nor Communists. We cannot possibly, as a democratic and free people, approve of the things that are happening in Germany or Italy, but, nevertheless, we are entering into discussions with them for a general peace. I am all for it, as long as we treat other nations of whose political systems we do not approve in the same way.[632]

Hugh Dalton had also expressed his own acceptance of continued negotiations with the Germans at the beginning of 1938.[633] Secondly, concerning those, such as Winston Churchill, who were adamantly opposed to further conciliation of the German dictator, it can be argued that, as with members of the cabinet and foreign policy committee, views regarding appeasement were not *directly* influential upon attitudes towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration. Thus, individuals did not support collaboration with the Soviets because they distrusted Hitler and opposed further concessions to him. Rather, their realisation of Hitler's aggressive intentions persuaded members of the opposition and dissident Conservatives to put aside the anti-Soviet prejudices that each held, and that otherwise would have motivated their opposition to Anglo-Soviet collaboration.

That it was, in fact, the decision to put aside prejudices towards the Soviet Union that determined the support of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration, can be shown in two ways. Firstly, through the hostile perceptions of the Soviet Union held by the anti-appeasers themselves, and secondly, through their specific reference to the idea of putting aside such prejudices in speeches and in their private papers. Each of the politicians and officials looked at in this

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[631] Danchev, *Alchemist of War*, p. 196.
[632] Col. 178. 9 Nov, 1938. 341 HC Deb 5s.
[633] Diary entry. 13 July, 1938. 1/19/23. Dalton Papers.

chapter harboured anti-Soviet prejudices whilst supporting closer Anglo-Soviet relations. Members of the Conservative party in particular had a history of intense political and ideological animosity towards the Soviet government. Winston Churchill, for example, had supported British intervention in Russia in an attempt to bring down the Bolsheviks following their withdrawal from the Great War in 1918.[634] In fact, he had led calls for an anti-Soviet alliance including a reconciliated and rearmed Germany.[635] During the 1920s, Churchill's hostility towards Bolshevism increased. He opposed all efforts to improve relations between the two countries and complained of destructive Communist influence not only within Britain but also in India.[636] Churchill's first gesture indicating a change of approach towards Moscow occurred in 1934, but he did not yet support any kind of alliance with the Soviets. Indeed, despite maintaining contact with the Soviet ambassador, Ivan Maisky, Churchill, along with other Conservatives, including Leopold Amery, sympathised with the anti-Communist Franco during the Spanish civil war.[637] During Chamberlain's premiership, Churchill continued to express his hostility towards Soviet Communism and the Soviet system of government in a number of speeches.[638] He told an audience in America that Communism and Nazi tyranny were 'the same things spelt in different ways.'[639] In the House of Commons he spoke of the threat both the Fascists and Communists ultimately posed to Britain. He warned that the Fascists 'like the Communists...must seek, from time to time, and always at shorter intervals, a new target, a new prize, a new victim.'[640]

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[634] Carlton, *Churchill*, pp. 4 - 26.
[635] For an excellent account of Churchill see, Geoffrey Best, *Churchill a Study in Greatness*, (London and New York, 2001).
[636] Carlton, *Churchill*, pp. 29 - 43.
[637] Ibid., pp. 46-51.
[638] Diary entry. 1/20/14. no date. Dalton Papers.
[639] 'The Defence of Freedom and Peace.' An address to the people of the United States of America. 16 October, 1938. Cited in Churchill ed., *Into Battle*, p. 56.
[640] Ibid.

Harold Macmillan fully sympathised with these anti-Communist sentiments. 'If the British government looked at Soviet Russia with suspicion, this was due to the history of some twenty years' , he wrote.

> Soviet propaganda and Communist subversion were rightly resented, not only at home where they were comparatively harmless, but throughout India and the Colonial Empire where they were more dangerous. Alliance with Bolshevist Russia may have been necessary, but it was distasteful.[641]

Anthony Eden, did not appear to share such suspicion and fear of Communism. Although, as Foreign Secretary, he had dealt regularly with fears of Communist expansion on the continent[642], he had, at the same time, continued to try and calm the attacks upon the Soviet government and what was perceived to be Comintern infiltration by members of his own party.[643] This most likely reflected Eden's efforts to prevent Soviet isolationism during the final months of his time in government. In no way, however, did his actions suggest he did not personally oppose Communist ideology.[644]

Clement Attlee and members of his Labour party were, in contrast to most members of the Conservative party, self-confessed Russophiles.[645] Hence it is true to say that they did not have to overcome such intense and age-old hostility towards the Soviet Union. They had, throughout the 1920s, worked to ensure improved Anglo-Soviet relations and in 1924, the Labour government led by Ramsay MacDonald, granted formal diplomatic recognition to the Soviet state. In August of the same year, the government initialled both a commercial agreement and a general treaty with the Soviets. In 1929, it was again under a minority Labour government that Britain and the Soviet Union exchanged

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[641] Macmillan, *Winds of Change*, p. 594.
[642] Letter to Eden from Lord Perth. 1 Aug, 1938. AP 13/1/49. Eden Papers. Birmingham University.
[643] Col. 14. 5 July, 1937. 326 HC Deb 5s.;
Cols. 1569-1570. 9 Nov, 1937. 328 Ibid ; Cols. 1167-1168. 23 June, 1937. 325 Ibid.
[644] Col. 1809. 19 July, 1937. Ibid.
[645] Diary entry. 2 Apr, 1939. 1/20/29. Dalton Papers.

ambassadors for the first time since the Bolshevik revolution. Consequently, Labour came to be accused by Conservatives of being 'soft' on Communism. Yet, the Labour party, too, had always distrusted and opposed Communism. Labour leadership denounced the British Communist party, and throughout the 1920s and 1930s, made every effort to distance themselves from Communism. 'London and Moscow' according to the International Labour Office in 1920, were 'two antagonistic forces struggling for the supremacy over the working masses.'[646] Antagonism and suspicion therefore remained despite efforts to improve relations. As late as April 1938, the Labour leadership revealed its continued aversion to Communism through its hostile reaction to Stafford Cripps' attempts to rally a popular front, including the Communist party in Britain.[647]

Both Labour and Conservative members were also appalled by the internal system of Stalin's dictatorship. Attlee and Boothby recalled in their memoirs their horrors at the realities of the Soviet regime.[648] 'In 1934', Boothby wrote, 'I found it oppressive almost beyond the point of endurance. The air was full of blood.' He recalled writing to his mother; 'If I lived in this country, I should be on Stalin's side - simply in order to survive.'[649]

Furthermore several anti-appeasers who supported collaboration with the Soviets during 1938, nevertheless harboured some suspicion about Moscow's reliability. Churchill, Liddell Hart, Oliver Harvey, Dalton, and Eden especially, found it difficult to trust the Soviet government's intentions with regard to the

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[646] International Labour Office, *The Congress of Labour and Socialist International*, 31 July-5 August, 1920, (Geneva, 1920). Cited in Curtis Keeble, *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-1989*, (London, 1990), p. 75.

[647] Dalton, *Memoirs*, pp. 208-216.

[648] Clement Attlee, *As It Happened*, (Surrey, 1954), p. 91; Macmillan, *Winds of Change*, pp. 353-4.

[649] Robert Boothby, *Recollections of a Rebel*, (London, 1978), p. 101.

resistance of aggression. At the beginning of the year, Eden did not believe the Soviet Union would intervene in a war in the near future.[650] Churchill admitted in May, that one could not count, in any definite manner, upon Russian action.[651] Liddell Hart similarly confessed that he was 'not inclined to trust Soviet representatives.'[652] Oliver Harvey believed 'we need have no illusions ourselves about Russia coming to our help.'[653] Hugh Dalton was unsure. The Soviet Union, he admitted, was still an 'enigma' to the West. 'This was the most difficult gap in all one's knowledge to get filled in... what *would* they do? No one in this country seemed to know.'[654] To Liddell Hart, Dalton described a 'growing doubt' amongst Labour delegates as to 'whether Russia would really join in.'[655]

In contrast to the more obvious anti-Soviet prejudices held by individuals such as Churchill, Lloyd George, one could argue, appeared to be pro-Soviet, even pro-Communist. During the Spanish civil war, for example, Lloyd George had openly supported the Republican government and opposed the decisions taken by Chamberlain's government. In his letters to the Soviet ambassador, he showed sympathy for the Republican movement, now largely supported by Soviet 'volunteers'. 'Spain looks much more promising than it did a few weeks ago', he wrote in February 1938. 'The Republican position is decidedly improving and that of the Fascists emphatically deteriorating...'[656] One could also point to his very good relationship with the Soviet ambassador, Ivan Maisky as evidence of his pro-Soviet sentiments. Lloyd George had had a good relationship with the ambassador since 1932. By July 1937, Beatrice Webb

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[650] Memorandum by Eden on the strength of Great Britain and of certain other nations. 26 November, 1937. no. 348. D.B.F.P., 2, XIX

[651] 'The Choice for Europe.' An address given in the Free Trade Hall. Manchester. 9 May, 1938. Cited in Churchill ed., *Into Battle*, p. 19.

[652] Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 167.

[653] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 122. 19 Mar, 1938.

[654] Diary entry. 8 Apr, 1938. 1/19/5. Dalton Papers.

[655] Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 165.

[656] Letter to Maisky from Lloyd George. 4 Feb, 1938. G/14/1/3. Lloyd George Papers.

noted of Maisky; 'he has become very intimate with Lloyd George.'[657] It also appears that the former Prime Minister 'sent a warm message of admiration to Stalin, as the greatest living statesman alive' as late as May 1938.[658]

Yet Lloyd George's actions and statements can be explained in terms other than his being pro-Communist or pro-Soviet. First, as this chapter and chapter eight illustrate, several M.P.s at this time had equally close relations with the Soviet ambassador.[659] Maurice Hankey, for example, wrote that Churchill was 'apparently a bosom friend of M. Maisky.'[660] Hugh Dalton's private papers reveal his own close contact with the ambassador.[661] It was through Maisky that individuals such as Lloyd George, Dalton, Nicolson and Churchill frequently learnt of government decisions and behaviour towards Moscow, and of Soviet proposals to the British and French, especially during 1939. This is not to say that they believed everything they were told.[662] Yet such contact enabled the anti-appeasers to challenge the government effectively. Indeed, Lloyd George perceived Maisky to be so important as an ally against Chamberlain's appeasement policy that he had sent a letter to Stalin in response to rumours that Maisky would soon become a victim of the purges and in an effort to save him.[663] Regarding his attitude towards the Spanish civil war, it is fair to point out that Lloyd George's support of the Republican government was in keeping with his hostility towards Italy. Everything the M.P. did, said, or wrote, that could be interpreted as indicative of his ideological and political bias in favour of the Soviet Union, can therefore, be more convincingly explained as illustrations of Lloyd George's desperation to ensure Moscow's involvement in

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[657] Sydney Aster, 'Ivan Maisky and Parliamentary Anti-Appeasement, 1938-9', in A. J. P. Taylor, *Lloyd George, Twelve Essays*, (London, 1971), pp. 319-320.
[658] Beatrice Webb. Diary Entry. 16 May, 1938. Cited in Ibid, pp. 323-4.
[659] Churchill, *World War*, p. 127.
[660] Carlton, *Churchill*, p. 61. Nb. 45.
[661] Diary entry. 14 June, 1939. 1/20/68. Dalton papers.
[662] Churchill, *World War*, p. 127.
[663] Beatrice Webb. Diary Entry. 16 May, 1938. Cited in S. Aster, 'Ivan Maisky', pp. 323-4.

the resistance to future aggression. At no point during 1938 or 1939 did the former Prime Minister admit a preference for Communism above Fascism, or state any admiration for the Soviet system. Indeed he referred to his horror and repudiation of 'a good many things which are done in Russia.'[664]

Yet the anti-appeasers proposed closer Anglo-French-Soviet relations. That these men continued to support collaboration with the Soviets despite their distrust of, and hostility towards, the Soviet Union, revealed the decisive influence of their *willingness to overlook their prejudices.* Moreover, the anti-appeasers substantiated this through their explicit acknowledgment of such a decision. The Liberals, Sinclair and Lloyd George, in particular, spoke of putting aside anti-Soviet prejudices in the House of Commons. Archibald Sinclair, for example, highlighted the 'cold and hostile references which the Prime Minister makes to Russia.'[665] At the end of 1938 he remarked; 'I hear it said, Russia has a different form of government. I hear it repeated, even in this House, that the Russians are Bolshevists and revolutionaries, and that they are untrustworthy.'[666] 'We must stop talking about not being drawn into a war between Bolshevism and Fascism',[667] he warned. Indeed, Sinclair pointed out that not only the Soviet Union but Germany, too, had 'a different form of government.' Consequently he urged that fellow politicians ' ignore the internal forms of government in our international relations', including that of the Soviet Union.[668]

Lloyd George pointed out the similarities between Germany and the Soviet Union. The British political elite, he observed, 'do not agree with Fascism or its

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[664] Cols. 178-9. 9 Nov,1938. 341 HC Deb 5s.
[665] Col. 957. 21 June, 1938. 337 Ibid.
[666] Col. 2537. 19 Dec,1938. 342 Ibid.
[667] Col. 2536. Ibid
[668] Col. 2537. Ibid.

methods, we repudiate them, we are horrified by some of them, but the same remark would apply, as far as the vast majority in this country are concerned, to a good many of the things which are done in Russia.' He urged that those in the House 'ought not to consider what ideology or system of government a country had before entering into a pact with it.'[669] Lloyd George revealed the illogical nature of the current foreign policy; 'Why should we enter into negotiations with these Fascist powers in spite of the fact that we disapprove of their methods and of the principles of their government, and yet rule out a much greater country?' he asked. 'On what grounds do we take that attitude?'[670] The former Prime Minister posed a good question, the answer to which many of the anti-appeasers believed lay the government's prejudices against the Soviet Union, and even, Lloyd George suggested, a 'sympathy with the Fascist dictators.' He told Chamberlain;

> ...you allow Italy and Germany to convert Spain into a Fascist State, so there will be three Fascist countries against you-and when that is done you are going to turn Russia. That is not the way if you are looking for peace. If you have any other ulterior purpose let us know what it is. You may have a genuine sympathy with the Fascist dictators, believe in their ideologies, think it is better for the world that we should have things of that sort.[671]

Lloyd George, in a moment of frustration, had made a similar accusation to that of several Soviet representatives, that the British Prime Minister was actually pro-Fascist. It was an extreme accusation with nothing in either official or private papers to support it. However, it revealed the desperation and anger of many of those who were judging the international situation and the Soviet Union objectively. Lloyd George went on to show just how past governments in Britain had been able to put aside their opposition to the internal system of Russia;

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[669] Cols. 178-9. 9 Nov, 1938. 341 Ibid; Col. 178. Ibid.
[670] Col. 179. Ibid.
[671] Col. 181. Ibid.

> ...we entered into a pact with Russia when it was Tsarist,with its pogroms, with its shooting down at the workmen in the streets of St Petersburg;we entered into a pact with a relentless autocracy. We did that in 1914, with the general consent of the nation.[672]

Lloyd George, however, had overlooked the fact that the Tsarist dictatorship of Russia had not been Communist. The minutes of Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee meetings show that it was not horror at the internal system of Stalin's government that British ministers and officials primarily objected to. Rather, Chamberlain and others feared the ideological threat of Communism. Fellow members of the House confirmed this when they responded to Lloyd George's tirade by reminding him of the past efforts of the Comintern ' to cause underground dissatisfaction.'[673] By 1938, Lloyd George himself had become increasingly annoyed at 'silly little interruptions like "Are you going to deal with the Bolsheviks?"'[674] But he had put aside his own negative opinions of the Soviet Union. Many within the House of Commons could not. Oliver Harvey realised this. He hoped that both the French and British governments would improve relations with Moscow 'regardless of their ideologies.'[675] Arthur Greenwood also appreciated the fear of Communist expansion within the British political elite. He recognised that many looked upon the Soviet Union as the 'eternal bogey.' He impressed upon the government that it was simply succumbing to the political manipulation of Hitler and Mussolini by allowing discriminatory views to dominate foreign policy decisions. The portrayal of the Soviet Union as the primary threat to Europe, he said, was 'vitally necessary to those two dictators to sustain their internal power.'[676]

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[672] Col. 179. Ibid.
[673] Ibid.
[674] Col. 180. Ibid.
[675] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, pp. 250-251. 6 Feb, 1938.
[676] Col. 49. 4 April, 1938. 334 HC Deb 5s.

Others also urged the government to judge the international situation dispassionately, in terms of aggressors and victims. Winston Churchill in particular adopted this view. Later, Churchill would be referred to as 'Russia's friend' because of his repeated calls for an alliance with the Soviets.[677] But he had never wanted to be friends with the Soviet government. His son, Randolph, later described Churchill's outlook;

> His natural liberalism is as much affronted by tyranny and cruelty in Nazi Germany as by similar acts in Communist Russia, but he does not allow the interior politics of foreign countries to cloud his judgment upon the practical question whether these countries are likely to prove themselves serviceable or dangerous to the high interests he set himself to guard.[678]

In 1938, Churchill believed that both Fascism and Communism were 'equally obnoxious to the principles of freedom.' 'But', he told others, 'surely we must have an opinion between right and wrong? Surely we must have an opinion between aggressor and victim?'[679] If the Soviet Union ever became the aggressor, then, of course, Britain would ally with Germany in order to resist aggression.[680] In 1938, however, Churchill could see that the Soviet Union was the victim, it was 'a country profoundly menaced by Nazi hostility.'[681] In an address to the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, Churchill told members of the public that the Soviet Union was a country 'which at any rate seeks no military aggression upon its neighbours, a country whose interests are peace..'[682]

Such a portrayal of the Soviet government as having no aggressive intentions

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[677] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers*, p. 178.
[678] Randolph Churchill, Preface to *Arms and Covenant.*
[679] Cited in Churchill ed., *Into Battle*, p. 17.
[680] Memorandum of Mr Churchill's interview with Herr Forster. 14 July, 1938. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill,* pp. 1100-1102
[681] 'The Choice for Europe.' An address given in the Free Trade Hall. Manchester. 9 May, 1938. Cited in Churchill ed., *Into Battle,* p. 19.
[682] Ibid.

did contradict other statements made by Churchill during this period. [683] Indeed, an overall analysis of his comments and writings reveal frequent contradictions in his portrayal of the Soviet government. Nor was he the only one to make such contradictory remarks about the Soviet Union, or even about Anglo-Soviet collaboration. The influence of party loyalty upon open remarks about government foreign policy has already been mentioned. Contradictory remarks regarding Anglo-Soviet relations and the nature of the Soviet government especially reflected the difficulty Churchill and others had in overlooking completely their personal perceptions of, and feelings towards, the Soviet Union. As for Halifax, and several ministers, it was extremely difficult for politicians such as Churchill to ignore what many had believed for years to be the incompatibility of Communist aims on the one hand, and the security of the West on the other. At least they were willing to try. Moreover, they did not abandon their support of improved Anglo-Soviet relations.

Hugh Dalton was another whose comments at times appeared contradictory. Despite his admitting doubts about Soviet reliability[684] , for example, he repeatedly defended Soviet intentions in meetings with Neville Chamberlain and debates within the House of Commons. In September, Dalton defended Moscow's refusal to act alone in the defence of Czechoslovakia as being in keeping with existing treaties, rather than being indicative of Moscow's insincerity. Thus, at a meeting with Chamberlain on 17 September[685] , Dalton criticised the Prime Minister for his acceptance of Bonnet's interpretation of a conversation held between Litvinov, and the French ambassador in Moscow, Jean Payart. Dalton recorded what he had been told, and his response, in his diary:

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[683] 'The Defence of Freedom and Peace.' An address to the people of the United States of America. 16 Oct, 1938. Cited in, Ibid., p. 56.

[684] Diary entry. 8 April, 1938. 1/19/5. Dalton Papers.

[685] For another account of the meeting see, Lord Citrine, *Men and Work. An Autobiography*, (London,1964), pp. 361-6.

The PM said that Bonnet, in consequence of this conversation, entertained grave doubts as to whether the SU really meant to do anything. At this point I said 'I must tell you Mr Prime Minister that I do not believe that story. It is quite contrary to what I have heard from more than one good source on which I place reliance...This conversation, moreover is quite inconsistent with the clear, repeated and recent statements by the Soviet that if France moved she would move at once...[686]

Even with hindsight and the resentment that existed following Moscow's agreement with Berlin in the summer of 1939, Dalton wrote that, in 1938, 'they would almost certainly have done something.'[687] He had had doubts about Moscow's reliability, then, but he had not allowed such unjustified suspicion to cloud the reality of the situation.

Not all anti-appeasers made contradictory statements. Despite their anti-Soviet prejudices in other areas, several had consistently judged Soviet foreign policy objectively. Robert Boothby was one. He reflected upon the facts of Soviet foreign policy in an article for the Daily Telegraph;

> Of Russia, in relation to the external world, we know a good deal. The Soviet government has on many occasions during the last ten years proved that it has no aggressive intentions of any kind. Russia has always been an exemplary member of the League of Nations, and there is no reason to believe that she would not have fulfilled both her obligations.[688]

Lord Robert Cecil agreed[689] , as did Archibald Sinclair. He believed the Soviet government would fulfil its obligations to Czechoslovakia not only because it was the 'historic protector of the Slav race'[690] , but because he, too, believed Moscow had proven itself 'true to all her international obligations.'[691] Like

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[686] Diary entry. 17 Sept, 1938. 1/19/32. Dalton Papers.
[687] Dalton, *Memoirs,* pp. 205-206.
[688] Letter to the *Daily Telegraph.* 13 Sept, 1938. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.
[689] Article for cooperation. July, 1938. No. 144. Add 51199. Lord Robert Cecil Papers.
[690] Col. 74. 3 Oct, 1939. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[691] Col. 2537. 19 Dec, 1938. 342 Ibid.

Boothby, Sinclair also referred to the Soviet Union as a 'loyal member of the League', which had 'actually befriended the victims of aggression'[692] throughout the 1930s. Similarly, Clement Attlee, 'at no time' had had 'any difficulty in knowing where the USSR stood.'[693] 'Throughout the whole of these proceedings', he argued, 'the USSR has stood by its pledges and its declarations...'[694] Harold Nicolson agreed.[695]

What, then, had persuaded these individuals outside of the government to overlook their more negative perceptions of the Soviet Union and support Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration during 1938? Crucially, it was the realisation that Britain, and indeed Europe, *needed* the Soviet Union. As mentioned earlier, this was primarily due to their distrust of the dictators and their appreciation of Hitler's aggressive intentions in particular. Inextricably linked to this, however, was an appreciation of the potential influence of the Soviet Union. All looked at in this chapter noted what they perceived to be the military attributes, strategical advantages and huge resources of the Soviet Union. Such strength would either be crucial in deterring aggression and therefore maintaining peace, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter. But, if necessary, it would also play an essential role in effectively resisting aggression in the event of war. Winston Churchill regularly referred to the Soviet Union in his speeches as 'the enormous power' and 'the great Russian mass.'[696] Although it was in fact a token effort on the part of the Soviet government, Churchill highlighted the Soviet assistance given to the Chinese facing Japanese aggression. In an address entitled 'the Choice for Europe', he told his audience;

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[692] Col. 74. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 Ibid.
[693] Cols. 57-8. Ibid.
[694] Col. 57. Ibid.
[695] Nicolson, *Diaries*, p. 366. 23 Sept, 1938.
[696] 'The Choice of Europe.' An address given in the Free Trade Hall. Manchester. 9 May, 1938. Cited in Churchill ed., *Into Battle*, p. 19.

Outside this happy island the world is dark with storm. In the Far East a brutal onslaught has been made upon what was thought to be an enormous, unorganised people. But the Chinese, patient, intelligent, brave, though sadly lacking in weapons, have rallied in resistance to the cruel invader and aggressor...Here we must recognise the service which Russia is rendering in the Far East. Soviet Russia, without firing a shot, is holding the best troops of Japan close gripped upon the Siberian front, and the rest of the Japanese armies may not in the end be found capable of subjugating and exploiting the four hundred million of Chinese.[697]

Churchill's friend, Boothby, also spoke of the Soviet Union as still one of the 'Great Powers.'[698] Oliver Harvey appreciated Soviet air strength especially; as '...weak as we might be, Germany must also take Russia into account with her airforce,..., Germany was very vulnerable in the East.'[699] Harold Nicolson was equally convinced that without Soviet assistance, Britain and France were 'simply not strong enough to resist Germany.'[700]

Hugh Dalton did not want what he perceived to be Soviet military resources to remain untapped. In the event of war, Dalton asked the Prime Minister, '...would it not be worth something to have the Red Army and the Red Airforce on our side rather than neutral?' 'The Prime Minister claims for himself the title of "realist"', he continued, 'but does not any realistic foreign policy in this country necessarily include an attempt to make sure that, if the worst should come, we should have that enormous potential force upon our side rather than immobilised?' Such enormous potential, he pointed out, was likely to prevent war ever occurring; 'Is it not a clear calculation,..., that if it can be shown in advance that there would be a combined force annoyed against an aggressor, which would include the Soviet Union, we should be much more likely to avoid

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[697] Ibid, p. 14.
[698] Letter to the *Daily Telegraph*. 19 Mar, 1938. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.
[699] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 122. 19 Mar, 1938.
[700] Nicolson, *Diaries*, pp. 329-330. 9 Mar, 1938.

war?"[701] Archibald Sinclair agreed. The West, in his view, needed the Soviet Union 'now more than ever to restore the balance of power in Europe' and resist German domination.[702]

Leopold Amery and Liddell Hart did note Soviet military weaknesses and strategic problems. About the defence of the Sudetenland, for example, Amery noted that 'Russia could not, indeed, have sent direct aid to Czechoslovakia, even by air, without Rumanian or Hungarian consent.' In fact, the Rumanian government eventually consented to allow Soviet aircraft to cross its airspace.[703] But even if it had refused, Amery added, 'she [the Soviet Union] could, at least, have threatened action against Poland and Hungary to restrain them from falling on Czechoslovakia's rear."[704] Liddell Hart, too, pointed out the limitations of Soviet strength. 'The value of the intervention of the Russian army is...doubtful', he explained to Churchill and others.

> Direct reinforcement of the Czech Army by way of Rumania, if permitted, would be slow and limited in effect. The most effective way of help might be the indirect form of an attack on East Prussia, assuming that a passage through Latvia and Lithuania was conceded.[705]

Nevertheless, Liddell Hart still stressed that Britain needed Soviet assistance if aggression was to ever be effectively resisted. He told several anti-appeasers that the 'early and adequate intervention of the Russian air force, operating from bases in Czechoslovakia, would seem to be an essential factor for the latter's chance of offering a prolonged resistance.'[706] Despite the devastating consequences of the recent purges, Liddell Hart also emphasised the improvements that had been made in the Soviet armed forces since the last war. He was not unrealistic in his appraisal, but did admit that the

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[701] Col. 142. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[702] Col. 74. Ibid; Col. 2537. 19 Dec, 1938. 342 Ibid.
[703] Adamthwaite, *France*, p. 204.
[704] Amery, *My Political Life*, p. 270.
[705] Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 161-2.
[706] Ibid.

> ...Russian army is probably more powerful than that of 1914, although handicapped by the strategic difficulty of access to Germany territory; on the other hand, Russia's huge airforce is not only a new means, but could be a far more potent menace than was ever developed during the last war.[707]

Most importantly, he agreed that it would be disastrous for Britain to have to face the Germans without a Soviet ally.[708]

Lloyd George, in contrast, at times exaggerated the strength and capabilities of Soviet forces[709] , and it is likely this that enabled Chamberlain and others to dismiss his arguments. Yet, such desperate statements in an effort to persuade others of the value of Soviet involvement should not be allowed to overshadow the more poignant points made by Lloyd George about the Soviet Union's natural resources and great potential. He was the only one, for example, to point out that, whereas 'Herr Hitler now boasts that he has 80,000,000 people inside Germany. There are 180,000,000 in Russia.'[710] Furthermore, he reminded those in the House of Commons:

> The Committee of Imperial Defence, three years before the war, had ascertained the strength of every army in the world, and when Sir Henry Wilson came to give us the strength of Russia he told us of the deficiencies in equipment, in transport, in guns, in the means of supply, and in ammunition. There was nothing which we discovered in the war which we had not been told beforehand. The amazement to is was that for two years Russia held up the attack of what was the finest army in the world at that time - without guns, without rifles...with hardly any ammunition they held up the Germans until we were ready. The Russians now have a great factory system; their transport has increased. They have a system which will enable them to supply all their deficiencies

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[707] B. Liddell Hart, 'Armed Balance in Europe - Defence gains in strength - Realism as way to peace', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 June, 1938. LH 10/1938/51. Liddell Hart Papers.
[708] B. Liddell Hart, 'The Czechs' cause - Call for British Stand - Danger of "Buying Peace", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June, 1938. LH 10/1938/50. Ibid.
[709] Col. 179. 9 Nov, 1938. 341 HC Deb 5s.
[710] Ibid.

themselves...[711]

Lloyd George, as did several of the anti-appeasers, spoke out more about Soviet potential after the Munich conference. The circumstances of the conference and the terms of the settlement had confirmed suspicions of Hitler's aggressive ambitions. Thus, the realisation of Britain's need of Soviet assistance heightened. Added to this, however, was now a genuine fear that an aggrieved Moscow would revert to a policy of isolationism. Consequently, desperation increased amongst the anti-appeasers to impress upon the government Moscow's potential and the importance of changing Britain's policy towards the Soviet Union before the opportunity to secure such an ally slipped away. The fear of Soviet isolationism most likely had something to do with a memorandum circulated by Ivan Maisky immediately after Munich which outlined Moscow's resentment at events.[712] Liddell Hart pointed out the ramifications in November. 'It was obvious', he wrote, 'that if Russia changed her recent line of policy towards a common effort to check Italy, France's position would be much weakened. That ominous possibility emphasised the importance of Britain giving her more assurance of active support.'[713] Clement Attlee similarly warned the House of Commons that the 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics may well hold aloof in future when it considers what little trust can be placed on our western democracies, and we shall be left alone with France.'[714] Linked to such a return to isolationism was the increasing possibility that the Soviet government might move towards a rapprochement with Berlin. There was no real evidence of such a danger at this stage and only Oliver Harvey acknowledged the possibility.[715] Nevertheless the fear of losing a Soviet ally, whose importance and

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[711] Col. 180. Ibid.
[712] Letter from Maisky to Lloyd George. 4 Oct, 1938. G/13/1/9. Lloyd George Papers. Cited S. Aster, *World War,* pp. 334-335.
[713] Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 194-195.
[714] Col. 63. 3 Oct, 1938. 339 HC Deb 5s.
[715] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 256. 19 Feb, 1938; pp. 250-251. 6 Feb, 1938.

potential was becoming increasingly obvious, was enough to motivate the anti-appeasers to significantly heighten their demands for closer Anglo-French-Soviet relations.

During 1938, then, the anti-appeasers identified and openly opposed Chamberlain's deliberate diplomatic exclusion of the Soviet Union. Despite the arguments of ministers at the time and several historians since, members of the opposition and Conservative party itself highlighted the existence and feasibility of an alternative policy. Several were ambiguous about what they wanted exactly. But Churchill, Dalton and Boothby clearly outlined their proposals for offensive- defensive alliances. Moreover, all agreed and demanded that the Soviet government be involved in efforts to resist aggression. The key to their proposals, they identified themselves, was a willingness to overlook one's personal and more negative views of the Soviet Union. Their recognition of Hitler's aggressive foreign policy ambitions and their opposition to a policy of repeated conciliation was crucial in its influence upon this decision. But it was ultimately the decision to put aside anti-Soviet prejudices that differentiated the anti-appeasers from those involved in the foreign policy decision making process. The anti-appeasers had identified both the key obstacle, and the solution, to the difficulties in Anglo-Soviet relations during this period. Government ministers were allowing ideological distrust to dictate foreign policy. If stability in Europe was to be secured, such distrust needed to be overlooked. Members of the Conservative party, unlike Labour members and Liberals, had to overcome decades of hostility and opposition to improved Anglo-Soviet relations. But, in 1938, all abhorred Stalin's internal system of government and were equally opposed to Communism. Several also admitted to doubts about Soviet reliability in the event of war. Opinions of the Soviet government amongst the anti-appeasers, therefore, did not differ greatly from those held by the decision-makers, including Chamberlain. In contrast to

Chamberlain and his supporters, however, Churchill, Dalton and others were willing to judge the international situation, and the Soviet Union's role in it, objectively.

It was not easy to overlook the doubts and distrust many had held for years. For Conservative members, especially, speaking out in favour of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration meant opposing their own leadership and the majority of their party. Consequently, contradictory statements were made. Nevertheless each continued to press the government towards collaboration with the Soviets. They were willing to do this because they recognised Britain's need of the Soviet Union as an ally. Despite the devastation inflicted by Stalin's purges, each looked at in this chapter appreciated Soviet military strength and its ability to provide a second front. Peace, they realised, could only be preserved if Hitler and Mussolini were faced with a united Anglo-French-Soviet front. It was tragic that neither Chamberlain nor his government appreciated the influence and importance of such an alliance as a deterrence factor. If war could not be avoided, the anti-appeasers argued, then only Soviet assistance could help resist aggression. When Chamberlain's acquiescence to Soviet exclusion at Munich appeared to drive Moscow back into isolationism, therefore, it is not surprising that individuals, hitherto relatively quiet on the subject, now spoke out with added force. In stark contrast, then, to the contention of Neville Thompson that these individuals were not 'real converts' but were the very people who would have soon regretted any agreement concluded with the Soviet government[716], the evidence of 1938 illustrated undeniably the genuine and desperate support for collaboration with the Soviets amongst the anti-appeasers.

[716] Thompson, *Anti-Appeasers*, p. 178.

Chapter Five:

Attitudes of the British Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and Chiefs of Staff towards the Soviet Union, March 1939 - May 1939.

International developments, political pressure from Westminster and, more importantly, rising suspicion surrounding German - Soviet relations, meant that the Soviet Union could no longer be ignored by the British government in 1939. Several politicians and officials within the foreign policy decision making process began to overlook their anti-Soviet prejudices in favour of an agreement. Reservations still existed, however, and certain ministers found themselves torn between the realities of Soviet potential on the one hand and their suspicion of Soviet intentions on the other. Several were not yet even willing to consider overlooking their ideological mistrust of the Soviet government. One example was Neville Chamberlain who, between March and May, revealed openly in the Cabinet and the Foreign Policy Committee, the strength of his prejudices and the extent to which he would go in order to prevent Anglo-Soviet collaboration.

On 15 March, German armed forces invaded Bohemia and Moravia. A puppet regime was established in Prague and what remained of Czechoslovakian independence disappeared. The governments bordering Czechoslovakia were alarmed and began to fear for their own security. On 17 March, Veoril Tilea, the Rumanian minister in London, informed the government that Berlin had issued an ultimatum to Bucharest and that as a result, the Rumanian government wanted Britain to assert itself in central and eastern Europe.[717] Tilea had, in fact, exaggerated the threat posed by Germany. However, by the time this was discovered, London had already taken action to begin collective resistance. Though the British government had said it would guarantee Czechoslovakia

[717] Halifax to Hoare. 17 Mar, 1939. no. 395; Halifax to Hoare. 18 Mar, 1939. no. 409. D.B.F.P., 3, IV; Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries* , p. 263; CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 12 18 Mar, 1939.

after Munich, the guarantee had never been ratified. London, therefore, had no obligation to defend Czechoslovakia. The occupation of Czechoslovakia did, nevertheless, unnerve the government. Poland, in particular, was now thought to be at risk. William Strang later recalled the anxiety: 'Were Hitler to subdue and absorb Poland and Rumania, as he had subdued and absorbed Czechoslovakia, he could turn upon Western Europe with added resources from eastern Europe at his command.'[718] With support growing for action to be taken against the German dictator, and with consideration of the general elections to be held in the autumn, Chamberlain decided to act.[719] He told the Cabinet that 'our next course was to ascertain what friends we had who would join us in resisting aggression.'[720]

The initial decision to cooperate with the Soviet Union in an effort to resist aggression in Europe was taken on 18 March. Thereafter, approaches were made to Poland, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece, Rumania and the Soviet Union with a view to obtaining assurances that they would join in resistance to any future act of German aggression.[721] Litvinov suggested a conference be held in Bucharest[722] , but Chamberlain rejected the proposal because of opposition from several governments, including the Spanish, Portuguese and Canadian.[723] After a proposal for a Four Power declaration[724] was also dropped because of Warsaw's opposition to Moscow's inclusion[725] , it was finally decided that a proposal of benevolent neutrality would be put to the Soviet Union, and a

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[718] Strang, *Home and Abroad,* p. 160.
[719] 18 Mar, 1939. FO 371 / 23060; FO 371 / 23061. Cited in Murray, *Balance of Power,* p. 286; Barnett, *British Power,* pp. 556-558.
[720] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 12.18 Mar,1939.
[721] Ibid.
[722] Seeds to Halifax. 19 Mar, 1939. no. 421. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[723] Aster, *World War,* p. 157.
[724] CAB 23/99 Cab. 13. 20 Mar, 1939.
[725] Kennard to Halifax. 22 Mar,1939. no. 479. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.

British guarantee given to Poland.[726] The government issued the guarantee on the 31 March. Amongst others, France, Rumania and the U.S. were contacted about such an agreement with Poland.[727] The only contact with the Soviet Union, however, was a meeting between Cadogan and Maisky on 29 March, in which Cadogan explained that the idea of a four power conference had been dropped and that the British government was contemplating giving assurances to the Poles and Rumanians.[728]

After the British guarantee to Poland was announced at the beginning of April, Anglo-Soviet relations became tense because of Moscow's resentment at being excluded, despite its proposal for a conference and its acceptance of the four power declaration proposal.[729] On 7 April, the Italian army invaded Albania. The British government responded by guaranteeing both Rumania and Greece on 13 April, albeit following threats from the French government to offer Rumania a guarantee independent of the British. As a result of pressure from the Turkish government and the House of Commons regarding Moscow's role in such resistance, and following military reports that highlighted the necessity of Soviet aid in any guarantee of Poland[730] , Chamberlain had little choice but to contact the Soviet government. Hence, on 14 April London finally put forward a proposal to Moscow which involved a declaration that if aggression took place against a European neighbour, Britain, France and the Soviet Union would offer assistance if needed.[731] On 18 April, the British received the Soviet counter proposal. It proposed that England, France and the Soviet Union should

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[726] Record of conversation between the British and French Ministers in London. 21 Mar, 1939. no. 458 ; Record of Anglo-French conversation held in the Prime Minister's room, House of Commons. 22 Mar, 1938. no. 484. Ibid.

[727] Halifax to Phipps. 27 Mar, 1939. no. 537 ; Halifax to Kennard and R. Hoare. 27 Mar, 1939. no. 538 ; Halifax to Lindsay. 28 Mar, 1939. no. 551 ; Halifax to Kennard and R. Hoare. 29 Mar, 1939. no. 561. Ibid.

[728] Halifax to Seeds. 31 Mar, 1939. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.

[729] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 272. 3 Apr, 1939.

[730] Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion.*

[731] Halifax to Seeds. 14 Apr, 1939. no. 170 . D.B.F.P., 3, V.

conclude an agreement of mutual assistance, including a military convention in case of aggression against any of the three powers.[732] The decision to reject the proposal was taken at a meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee on 19 April.[733] But it took the British government almost three weeks to reply to the Soviet proposal.

In contrast, the French government now supported a triple alliance. Following Munich both Daladier and his military advisers had decided against any further capitulation in the face of German aggression.[734] Following the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia in March, Paris took action to ensure future resistance of Hitler's aggression.[735] Bonnet had supported the guarantee of Poland[736] and in April, Paris pressed London to guarantee Rumania.[737] Notably, Bonnet had also supported the rejection of Soviet proposals. French hostility and ideological suspicion that had stemmed from earlier accusations of Comintern interference in French internal affairs still existed. By the end of March, however, the French government had adopted a different attitude towards collaboration with the Soviet Union. The French general staff admitted that Soviet military assistance was essential if only to aid Poland's survival.[738] A Soviet alliance was now thought to be imperative.[739] As a result, Bonnet sent, on two occasions, separate proposals to Moscow. On 14 April, he proposed a mutual assistance pact including Britain, France and the Soviet Union.[740] An alliance was not concluded. The British had not agreed to such proposals. After its decision to

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[732] Seeds to Halifax. 18 Apr, 1939. no. 201. Ibid.
[733] CAB 27/624 43 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939.
[734] Alexander, *Gamelin*, p. 279.
[735] Adamthwaite, *France*, p. 354.
[736] Record of conversation between the British and French Ministers in London. 21 Mar, 1939. no. 458; Record of Anglo-French conversation held in Prime Minister's room at the House of Commons. 22 Mar, 1939. no. 484. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[737] Aster, *World War*, p. 140.
[738] Alexander, *Gamelin*, p. 305.
[739] Adamthwaite, *France*, pp 235 - 236; p. 312.
[740] Phipps to Halifax. 20 Apr, 1939. no. 241. D.B.F.P., 3, V.

reject the Soviet proposal on 19 April, London had informed Paris that it would try to persuade the Soviet government once more that it should make a unilateral declaration offering assistance to those who desired it. Despite initially accepting the British decision[741] , however, Bonnet then went ahead and showed the French proposals for a mutual alliance to the Soviet ambassador in Paris, Iakov Z. Surits.[742] Despite the efforts of the French to ensure the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact between Britain, France and the Soviet Union[743] , and whilst the British stalled, Litvinov was removed from office on 4 May. He was replaced by Vyacheslav Molotov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers since 1930. Throughout most of the 1930s, Litvinov had represented the Soviet government's support for collective action.[744] His removal shocked the cabinet and sparked rumours that the Soviet government was now thinking of abandoning negotiations with the Western powers and even possibly moving towards Berlin.[745]

Several ministers at the time, and historians later, explained the rejection of Soviet proposals for collaboration during this period in terms of the Polish guarantee. The Polish guarantee, it was argued, effectively tied the hands of the British government regarding its policy towards the Soviet Union because the Poles rejected any involvement of the Soviet Union.[746] Neville Chamberlain, in particular, emphasised Polish opposition to Moscow's involvement in any form of agreement as a reason to reject Soviet proposals. He denied all responsibility for the decision. Acknowledging that 'this plan left Soviet Russia out of the picture...' he stated, 'we should have to explain to her that the objections to her

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[741] Phipps to Halifax. 3 May, 1939. no. 351. Ibid.
[742] Ibid.
[743] Phipps to Halifax. 20 Apr, 1939. no. 241. Ibid.
[744] Ulam, *Expansion* , pp. 253-7; Watt, *How War Came,* pp. 227-229.
[745] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 287. 4 May, 1939; Seeds to Halifax. 5 May, 1939. no. 359; Halifax to Loraine. 6 May, 1939. no. 398. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[746] CAB 27/624 38 mtg. 27 Mar, 1939.

open inclusion come not from ourselves but from other quarters...'[747] Later, in response to the Chiefs of Staff's report in favour of collaboration with the Soviet Union, Chamberlain once again emphasised what he considered to be the overriding importance of political factors:

> ...the Chiefs of Staff had rightly, from their point of view, stressed considerations of a military and strategical character, but if these considerations pointed in one direction and the political considerations pointed in another direction, while due regard must be had for the former, care must also be taken not to overlook the importance of the latter.[748]

The Foreign Secretary agreed, telling the Foreign Policy Committee at the beginning of May that if 'we entered into a firm pact with Russia we placed Poland and Rumania in a position of great difficulty and embarrassment.'[749] Such an agreement would 'have a most disturbing influence in Warsaw'[750] especially, and would therefore endanger the collective front. Halifax explained that the government 'had given certain assurances to Rumania and Poland, and we had asked Russia to give similar assurances. If we were to go further we should run a serious risk of breaking the common front which we were endeavouring to establish.'[751] Furthermore Halifax noted the strategical importance of both countries. 'Without their agreement', he told Eric Phipps, Soviet troops would not physically be able to reach central Europe in the event of war.[752]

The Polish and Rumanian governments were intensely hostile towards Stalin's dictatorship. 'It was well to remember' Halifax had told the Cabinet, 'that the feeling of large numbers of people in Europe, which had been nearer to

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[747] Ibid.
[748] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 181-182. 19 May, 1939; CAB 27 / 625 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939.
[749] CAB 27 / 625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.
[750] Halifax to Phipps. 21 Apr,1939. no. 247. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[751] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 24. 26 Apr, 1939.
[752] Halifax to Phipps. 21 Apr,1939. no. 247. D.B.F.P., 3, V.

Communism than this country, were strongly hostile to Russia.'[753] Warsaw in particular also feared provoking Hitler by appearing to be in the Soviet camp.[754] Colonel Jozef Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, informed Sir Howard William Kennard, the British ambassador in Warsaw, that the Polish government could not participate in an agreement including the Soviet Union because Soviet participation in any plans would place Poland in the 'Soviet camp' and therefore 'provoke Germany.'[755] Samuel Hoare also noted that Beck had left the British cabinet 'in no doubt as to his country's attitude, declaring that there would be an "explosion" if we persisted with the proposal of any joint action that was intended to include Poland and Russia in the same bloc.'[756]

The assertion that such Polish opposition to Moscow's involvement dictated foreign policy decisions regarding Anglo-Soviet collaboration is, however, not true. Rather, evidence reveals that Cabinet ministers, but especially Neville Chamberlain, used the Polish guarantee as a convenient excuse to disguise their own opposition to an Anglo - French - Soviet alliance.[757] It is notable, for example, that from the moment the decision was taken to contact governments regarding collective action, Chamberlain favoured an agreement with Poland and made his aversion to Moscow's involvement clear. On 22 March, the Prime Minister categorically stated his preference for Polish involvement in a policy of resistance during a meeting with Lord Halifax and Georges Bonnet.[758] On 23 March, he told the TUC and National Executive of the Labour Party that Poland was now the key and that the Soviet proposal for a conference was

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[753] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 26. 3 May, 1939.
[754] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, pp. 345-347; Kennard to Halifax. 22 Mar, 1939. no. 479. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[755] Ibid.
[756] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, pp. 345-347.
[757] Carley, *The Alliance*, p. 148.
[758] Record of an Anglo-French Conversation held in the Prime Minister's Room at the House of Commons. 22 Mar, 1939. no. 484. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.

impracticable.[759] When the Cabinet met on 29 March, Chamberlain reiterated his opinion that 'it was of utmost importance to obtain the support of Poland and that it was impossible to secure this if Russia was brought into the declaration.'[760]

Thereafter, Chamberlain presented the guarantee to the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee as decided policy.[761] Neither the military and strategical value of Moscow's inclusion, nor the problems that would result from its isolation, were debated. Chamberlain instead looked only for ratification of his policy, confident that no Cabinet member, even if they did support Moscow's involvement, would question the foreign policy decision making process.[762] Furthermore, as Anita Prazmowska has convincingly shown in her book, Britain, Poland and the Eastern Front, the guarantee to Poland represented only a political warning to Hitler. The British government, when it issued the guarantee, had no intention of defending Polish territorial integrity in the event of war. The terms of the guarantee did not offer military talks.[763] In fact it stated that the British would not intervene unless there was a definite act of aggression against Poland, unless the Poles resisted and asked for aid, and unless the French were fully committed.[764] The French had no intention of coming to the assistance of Poles in the event of war. Throughout the late 1930s, French military planners, particularly General Maurice Gamelin, had prioritised Poland

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[759] Record of meeting with the TUC and the National Executive of the Labour Party, 23 Mar, 1939. FO 371 / 22967; Christopher Hill, *Cabinet Decisions in British Foreign Policy,* (Cambridge, 1991) n. 55, p. 273.

[760] CAB 23 / 98 Cab. 15 . 29 Mar, 1939.

[761] Hill, *Cabinet Decisions* ,p. 39.

[762] Ibid, p. 39, pp. 38-39, pp. 42-43; Robert Manne, 'The British Government and the Question of the Soviet Alliance, 15 March - 24 August, 1939. (Unpublished Thesis for B-Phil in International Relations at University of Oxford, 1972); Robert Manne, 'The British Decision for Alliance with Russia, May 1939', *Journal of Contemporary History,* (1974).

[763] Anita Prazmowska, *Britain, Poland and the Eastern Front, 1939,* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 38-133; p. 54; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled,* pp. 138-139. For another assessment of the Polish guarantee and Anglo-Polish relations during this period see, Simon Newman, *March 1939, The British Guarantee to Poland,* (Oxford, 1976).

[764] Barnett, *British Power,* pp. 560-561.

as an ally. It was believed to be the cornerstone of an eastern alliance. Yet, French military experts knew at the time of guaranteeing Poland that it could not militarily contribute to the defence of Polish territory during the early months of war. Instead, they were only willing to go to war over Poland because it was wrongly believed that Polish forces would occupy the Germans long enough to allow the British and French to prepare for war.[765] Thus, no military or financial aid, crucial for the preparation of war, was sent to Poland by either the French or British following the announcement of the guarantee.[766]

The terms of the guarantee and the intentions of the British government were purely political, and it therefore signified no new commitment by the British to Poland.[767] Relations between the Polish authorities and British representatives appeared to have improved following the tensions of the Czech crisis in September[768] , but Polish views had not gained any new or significant influence over the British foreign policy decision making process.[769] British foreign policy was still ultimately decided by London and according to the interests of Britain. This was confirmed when ministers later decided to support an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance in May. The decision was made on the same day that the Polish government was asked for its opinion regarding such an alliance[770] , and more importantly, two days before the Polish reply was received.[771] Lord Halifax proposed to deal with the objections of the Poles and Rumanians by explaining 'to the States in question that while no doubt the guarantee might be at the

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[765] Alexander, *Gamelin,* p. 282, p. 282, pp. 302-303, pp. 310-311.
[766] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled,* pp. 138-139; Prazmowska, *Poland,* pp. 38-133; p. 54.
[767] Ibid.
[768] Kennard to News Department. (R. Leeper). 8 Feb, 1939. FO 395/662.
[769] This is not to say that the Polish government had ever had any influence over British policy. Indeed, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, most British politicians immensely disliked the Poles. For more on Poland see, Newman, *March 1939.*
[770] Hill, *Cabinet Decisions,* p. 58; Halifax to Kennard and R. Hoare. 19 May, 1939. no. 556. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[771] Kennard to Cadogan. 22 May, 1939. no. 586; R. Hoare to Cadogan, 23 May, 1939. no. 595. Ibid.

moment of some embarrassment to them it would be of great value if war broke out."[772] Both the Polish and Rumanian objections to Soviet inclusion in an alliance system were dismissed by the vast majority of the Cabinet, as fears of a German-Soviet rapprochement increased.[773] Chamberlain continued for several days to highlight the opposition of both the Poles and Rumanians, but he was not yet willing to accept the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement. Moreover, even he seemingly overlooked the protests of the Poles and Rumanians and agreed to a mutual alliance with the French and Soviets on 24 May.

Not everyone involved in the foreign policy decision making process believed the Polish guarantee, and therefore the opinion of the Poles, was more important than the inclusion of the Soviet Union in plans to resist German aggression. The Chiefs of Staff, for example, though still not in favour of an Anglo-French-Soviet military alliance in March 1939, did state their preference for an Anglo-Soviet agreement of some kind. In three separate reports submitted during March and April, the Chiefs of Staff stated clearly that they favoured an Anglo-Soviet agreement above guarantees to either Poland or Rumania, and emphasised the potential value of Soviet assistance. In the first report issued on 18 March, an explicit comparison was made between the Soviet Union and Poland.[774] Lord Chatfield, the Minister for Coordination of Defence,

[772] CAB 27 / 625 54 mtg. 26 June, 1939.
[773] CAB 27 / 625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.
[774] CAB 53 / 10 C.O.S. 283 mtg. 18 Mar, 1939. Cited in Manne, 'British Decisions', p. 6. Murray, in his book, *Balance of Power,* p. 446, challenges Manne's interpretation of the chiefs of staff's report on 18 March which argues that the Soviet Union was considered more important than Poland. Murray contends that 'they urged this because of Russia's deterrent value on Japan, not because of her military strength in Europe.' It is true that military assessments showed the Soviet Union had little offensive capability. However, it was not only valued for the deterrent it might present to Japan. It is the contention of this thesis that the chiefs of staff favoured the Soviet Union because it was believed it would be crucial to the success of collective resistance in Europe. The Soviet Union was perceived to be the only country that could enforce a crucial economic blockade on Nazi Germany, preventing it from strengthening during the war. In addition, the military experts recognised that the Soviet Union alone had the potential to establish a strong, prolonged eastern front.

W. S. Morrison, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Chatfield's deputy in the House of Commons, and the three service ministers were told that 'if the U.S.S.R. was on our side and Poland neutral, the position would alter in our favour.'[775] Such sentiments were repeated on 28 March, when the Committee of Imperial Defence were instructed to consider the 'Military Implications of an Anglo-French Guarantee of Poland and Rumania,'[776] and on 25 April, when a detailed evaluation of all military and economic factors inherent in such an alliance was presented to the Foreign Policy Committee.[777] Both reports acknowledged the weaknesses within Soviet forces as a result of Stalin's purges.[778] The Soviet Union remained, to some extent, 'militarily an uncertain quantity.'[779] Problems also existed with regard to communications and reserves. Thus, the Chiefs of Staff considered 'it doubtful whether the national economy of the Soviet could deliver war stores at a greater rate than would suffice to keep in the field on the Western Front 30 Divisions.' Soviet plans had previously calculated that industrial output would provide for 100 divisions in the field from from the outset of war. Grave weaknesses in the Soviet railway system were also highlighted as a major difficulty in transporting materials and men, and, ministers were informed, that after 'two or three weeks military mobilisation would have to be suspended, or at least held up, to avoid a complete breakdown in industry and national life.'[780]

The Chiefs of Staff furthermore acknowledged the political problems that were attached to Soviet involvement in the resistance to German aggression. They, drew 'attention to the fact, that the various countries in which we visualise in this Report that the Russian forces might be used, may be themselves most

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[775] Ibid.
[776] CAB 53 / 47 C.O.S. 871 mtg. 28 Mar, 1939.
[777] CAB 27 / 627 82 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939.
[778] Ibid.
[779] CAB 53 / 10 C.O.S. 283 mtg. 18 Mar, 1939.
[780] CAB 27 / 627 82 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939.

unwilling to admit the entry of Russian forces into their territory...' Such ideological hostility was not only directed towards Communism either. The report added;

> ...that the Russians themselves are disinclined to allow their own forces to operate from a country where they may become liable to bourgeois influence. This deep-seated hostility to Communism and vice versa may well nullify the value of many of the military advantages we put forward in support of Russian co-operation.'[781]

Nevertheless, the Chiefs of Staff believed and argued that the Soviet Union remained the key to any eastern resistance to German aggression. The two countries highlighted by the Prime Minister as vital to any collective resistance would, in fact, crumble under attack: 'Rumania could certainly be overrun quickly', and 'Poland might be overrun in a matter of months', it was reported.[782] In reality Britain and France would be unable to fulfil their guarantees. Thus, for Poland and Rumania to resist attack they needed Soviet assistance. The fate of Poland, Rumania and the eastern front would depend almost entirely on the Soviet Union. The Chiefs of Staff explained:

> When considering the question of any form of guarantee to Poland and Rumania it must be borne in mind that Great Britain and France could afford them no direct support by sea, on land or in the air to help them resist German invasion. Furthermore, in the present state of British and French armament production, neither Great Britain nor France could supply any armaments to Poland and Rumania who would have to depend for assistance in this respect solely on the U.S.S.R.'[783]

It was also imperative that Germany, in the event of war, be faced with two fronts.[784] In the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff, only the Soviet Union could provide such a second front. Soviet forces were not strong enough to launch an

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[781] Ibid.
[782] CAB 53 / 47 C.O.S. 871 mtg. 28 Mar, 1939.
[783] Ibid.
[784] CAB 53 / 10 C.O.S. 283 mtg. 18 Mar, 1939.

effective offence, but they were capable of fiercely defending Soviet territory.[785] The Soviet Union had better prospects of resistance and would be able to enforce an economic blockade of Germany.[786] This included interference with the supply to Germany of Swedish iron ore,[787] and the insurance that 'Germany would be unable to draw upon Russia's immense reserves of food and raw materials.'[788] Furthermore, it was noted that Soviet inclusion might deter Japanese forces from entering the war, or at least deter them from attacking Singapore and Australia.[789] The 'intervention of Japan' was considered to be 'a serious threat to the Allied position in the Far East' and therefore of major concern to both the Chiefs of Staff and the Cabinet. It was 'almost certain that Japan would attack Hong Kong', but the biggest fear concerned a Japanese attack on Singapore. If Japan captured Singapore, 'the British fleet would have no base in the Far East from which to operate.'[790] The report stressed that the inclusion of the Soviet Union could prove valuable with regard to the Far East. Not only did the Chiefs of Staff believe 'the possibility of Russian intervention would deter Japan'[791] , they also suggested that 'the necessity for safeguarding her [Japanese] lines of sea communications to the Asiatic mainland against possible action by the Eastern Naval Forces of the U.S.S.R. would have a hampering effect on Japanese strategy.[792] The Chiefs of Staff, then, were now convinced that the Soviet Union could make a significant contribution in the event of war. Indeed, they had effectively outlined their belief that Soviet cooperation with the West would be 'invaluable.'[793]

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[785] Ibid.
[786] Ibid.
[787] CAB 27 / 627 82 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939; CAB 53 / 48 C.O.S. 891.
[788] CAB 53 / 47 C.O.S. 872 mtg. 3 Apr, 1939.
[789] CAB 53 / 10 C.O.S. 283 mtg. 18 Mar, 1939.
[790] CAB 53 / 48 C.O.S. 886 mtg. 20 Apr, 1939.
[791] Ibid. 890 mtg. 24 Apr, 1939.
[792] Ibid. 891 mtg. 24 Apr, 1939.
[793] CAB 53 / 47 C.O.S. 872 mtg. 3 Apr, 1939.

In the Cabinet, the Chiefs of Staff were supported by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Stanhope, the Secretary of State for War, Leslie Hore-Belisha, the Minister for Health, Walter Elliott , and Samuel Hoare. Lord Stanhope agreed with the Chief of Staff's emphasis upon the value of the Soviet Union as a second front in the event of war. In a meeting of the cabinet on 18 March he explained that 'if Poland and Russia were allies there would be a big battle front in the East as well as in the West and Herr Hitler was greatly averse to being faced with this situation.'[794] Thus, although Stanhope did not state exactly what relationship or agreement he favoured with the Soviet Union, he obviously perceived Moscow to be a valuable component in any resistance plans. Hore-Belisha was more specific about the type of agreement he wished to see concluded between the Soviet Union and Britain. He told the cabinet on 18 March that he was 'in favour of reconsidering our policy and contracting frank and open alliances with countries such as Poland and Russia.'[795] Similarly Walter Elliot stated his personal belief that 'it was most important to get in touch with Russia...'[796] Interestingly, both Stanhope and Hore-Belisha, when stating their support of Soviet involvement, assumed Polish compliance. As it became increasingly apparent that Warsaw rejected any Soviet involvement neither Hore-Belisha nor Stanhope commented further on the subject. The most likely reason for this is that both men realised and accepted Chamberlain's determination to secure a guarantee of Poland. Indeed, neither minister was given much opportunity to discuss the Soviet role until after the Polish guarantee was signed, when the Prime Minister could then simply point to Warsaw's hostility to Moscow as a reason why Soviet involvement remained impossible.

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[794] CAB 23/98 Cab. 12. 18 Mar, 1939; CAB 27/624 38 mtg. 27 Mar, 1939.
[795] Ibid.
[796] Ibid.

A more persistent supporter of an Anglo-Soviet agreement within the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee was Samuel Hoare. Between September 1938 and March 1939, Hoare had struggled to overcome his suspicion of Soviet intentions because of the increasing evidence of Moscow's potential influence upon international developments. Throughout 1939, he consistently urged Chamberlain to negotiate and conclude an agreement with the Soviet government. Despite being a member of the inner cabinet and a loyal supporter of Chamberlain's premiership, in March, Hoare openly disagreed with the Prime Minister's rejection of Soviet overtures. The Home Secretary argued for more equal terms of agreement to be given to Moscow, and stated his desire for the Soviet Union to be brought into a 'common front.'[797]

Hoare agreed with the Chiefs of Staff that the Soviet Union would be a valuable ally in the event of war, but he also believed that Soviet involvement in a policy of collective action could help preserve peace. The Home Secretary emphasised the sheer size of the Soviet Union as a considerable asset to any peace front, and stressed that 'Russia constituted the greatest deterrent in the East against German aggression.' Without the inclusion of the Soviet Union he feared that British foreign policy would be seen 'in many quarters' as having suffered 'a considerable defeat.'[798]

Notably, Hoare did not demand an alliance in March 1939. Instead he called for Soviet neutrality to be secured. [799] The reason for Hoare's support of an agreement of neutrality was, however, distinct from Chamberlain's. Thus, Hoare believed a proposal of neutrality represented the more realistic opportunity for an agreement to be concluded. He was convinced that an

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[797] CAB 27/624 38 mtg. 27 Mar, 1939.
[798] Ibid.
[799] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 58.

alliance between Britain, France and the Soviet Union would be 'impossible' because of 'Stalin's attitude', namely his resentment at London's treatment of Moscow.[800] The Home Secretary believed, then, that the main opposition to such an alliance would come from the Soviet dictator. This was in contrast to Neville Chamberlain who supported Soviet neutrality as a means of avoiding tying Britain to an alliance with the Soviet Union.[801] At the same time, Hoare's desire for Soviet involvement in no way reflected a significant change in attitude towards the Soviet Union. Indeed, during March, the Home Secretary confirmed that he held no 'predilections' in favour of Moscow.[802] His support of negotiations and the involvement of the Soviet Union during March was, instead, motivated by a fear of Moscow's reaction to being excluded. He urged the cabinet to consider Soviet paranoia in its decision making.[803] In particular, however, Hoare hinted at the disastrous possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement. Thus he hoped to keep Stalin from 'throwing his weight of Russian power...on the enemy's side.'[804]

Two more Cabinet ministers whose attitudes towards collaboration with Moscow were changing due to their suspicion and fear of a German-Soviet rapprochement were Oliver Stanley, the President of the Board of Trade, and the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald.[805] Oliver Stanley, for example, suggested at the beginning of negotiations that 'there might be a separate agreement between Russia and Great Britain to the effect that if either was attacked in Europe, each would come to the other's aid.'[806] Later, in May, he would reveal the motive behind his support of an agreement as being an

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[800] Ibid, p. 58; p. 351.
[801] CAB 23 / 98 Cab 15. 29 Mar, 1939.
[802] CAB 27/624 38 mtg. 27 Mar, 1939.
[803] Ibid.
[804] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 370
[805] CAB 23/99 Cab 26. 3 May, 1939.
[806] Ibid. Cab 15. 29 Mar, 1939.

increasing fear that 'Russia might well gravitate towards Germany.'[807] MacDonald, who had openly opposed any close relations between Britain and the Soviet Union during the Spanish civil war,[808] told the Foreign Policy Committee in March 1939 that it was better to have the Soviet Union on the side of the allies rather than neutral, or as an enemy.'[809] He, too, went on to warn the cabinet of the danger of an alliance between Hitler and Stalin.[810]

Neither MacDonald nor Stanley spoke out specifically in favour of an alliance with the Soviets and French during March and April. They had been repeatedly and categorically told by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary that such an alliance was impossible owing to Polish and Rumanian opposition. Neither had been aware of the military reports compiled by the Chiefs of Staff. In addition, neither was by April convinced of the danger of a German - Soviet rapprochement. Thus, there was as yet no need for them, or indeed any of the ministers or officials, to overlook the personal reasons that motivated one's opposition to collaboration with the Soviets. Nevertheless, it is significant that MacDonald and Stanley, together with several others within the Cabinet, had begun to acknowledge Moscow's potential influence, and so support some form of Anglo-Soviet agreement.

In contrast, Chamberlain continued to oppose collaboration with the Soviet government. He still refused to accept any of the strategic or military attributes of Soviet involvement when discussing foreign policy with his Cabinet. Moreover, he suppressed the two military reports put forward by the Chiefs of Staff which insisted that the Soviet Union's involvement in an agreement was

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[807] CAB 27 / 625 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939.
[808] Edwards, *The British Government*, p. 159.
[809] CAB 27 / 627 82 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939.
[810] CAB 23/99 Cab 26. 3 May, 1939.

crucial to any successful resistance of aggression,[811] and sanitised the April report by limiting its contents to an assessment of the military strength of the Soviet Union only.[812] The Chiefs of Staff were told not to question whether the British government should accept Soviet proposals for a mutual alliance.[813] The Prime Minister, therefore, acted deliberately to prevent his Cabinet learning about what he recognised to be powerful evidence in support of those who were already urging an agreement with the Soviet Union. If the real reason for Chamberlain's continual rejection of Soviet proposals was to be effectively disguised then the perception of the Soviet Union as militarily useless had to be maintained.

Chamberlain's decision to withhold the Chiefs of Staff's reports from his Cabinet and the Foreign Policy Committee was indicative of his autocratic control over government and information, particularly concerning foreign policy. Indeed, throughout his premiership, Chamberlain had regulated all knowledge regarding foreign affairs and foreign policy through his tight control of the British press and the BBC. The Prime Minister only exploited a system that had been established during the 1930s, nevertheless, between 1937 and 1939, the main sources of information for the British public regarding foreign affairs existed 'merely [as] a partisan political weapon controlled by

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[811] Chamberlain prevented the reports from being circulated to the cabinet. CAB 53/10 C.O.S. 283 mtg. 18 Mar, 1939; Ibid. 285 mtg. 28 Mar, 1939; Manne, 'British Decision' , pp. 4-7; p. 15; Bond, *Military Policy,* pp. 307-308; Hill, *Cabinet Decisions,* p. 279.

[812] CAB 27/624 43 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939; CAB 27/627 82 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939; CAB 53/ 48. COS 887 mtg. 24 Apr, 1939 . Cited in Manne, 'British Decision', p. 19.

[813] CAB 27/624 43 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939. Hill in *Cabinet Decisions,* p. 54, argues that it was actually Chatfield who asked the Prime Minister for a limit to be put on the Chiefs of Staff's report in April because of his own opposition to an alliance. However, firstly, Hill provides no evidence for his contention. In addition, even if Chatfield had initially asked for a limit to be implemented, Chamberlain's permission nonetheless is still indicative of his own opposition the idea of an Anglo-Soviet alliance.

politicians.'[814] Together with Joseph Ball, Director of Conservative Research Department, and George Steward, the Press Relations Officer for No. 10 Downing Street, Chamberlain ensured widespread press support for appeasement policy. He personally refused to answer questions of which he did not approve.[815] Some newspaper proprietors and editors within the British press, in particular Geoffrey Dawson, editor of the Times, shared Chamberlain's views of Nazi Germany and of the Soviet Union. Dawson supported Chamberlain's conciliatory policy towards the dictators.[816] Throughout 1938, he had opposed all suggestions of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance, and though the paper did not oppose negotiations with the Soviets at the beginning of 1939, it was only luke warm in its reporting. In private, Dawson did not express such ideological hostility towards the Soviet Union as Neville Chamberlain had, and some writers have doubted its influence upon his reporting.[817] However, the editor did speak of 'the menace of the Soviet'[818] and of his own suspicion regarding the Soviet government's sincerity. During the later stages of the negotiations, the paper provided the government with whatever information it collated from abroad in support of the Prime Minister's opposition to an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance.[819]

Of course one cannot in anyway compare the British system of government to the dictatorships on the continent. But one should not underestimate the Prime Minister's potential control over foreign policy during this period. Leopold

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[814] Richard Cockett, *Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement and the Manipulation of the Press*, (London, 1989), p.1; p. 53; pp. 110-112. Evidence of the debates and criticisms with regard to alleged government censorship of the press can be found in the News Department papers at the Public Record Office, Kew. See FO 395 series. For example, FO 395/622.
[815] Ibid, p. 8; p. 85.
[816] Ibid, p. 12; CAB 27 / 627 82 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939; CAB 53 / 48 C.O.S. 891 mtg. 24 Apr, 1939; *History of the Times, 1921 - 1948,* Vol. II,(London, 1952), p. 906; Diary entry. 30 Sept, 1938, p. 144. MS Dawson 42. Dawson Papers. Bodleian Library Archives.
[817] *History of the Times,* pp. 910-911; 919.
[818] Diary entry. 12 Apr, 1939, p. 59; 22 Aug, 1939, p. 125. MS Dawson 42. Dawson Papers.
[819] Cockett, *Twilight,* p. 116.

Amery said of Chamberlain that 'he knew his own mind and saw to it that he had his own way. An autocrat with all the courage of his convictions right or wrong.'[820] Throughout 1939, Chamberlain's actions proved this. Withholding the Chiefs of Staff's reports was one example, but his most influential act was to yet come, in May.

What Chamberlain's decision to withhold the Chiefs of Staff's reports did show is that neither the contact made with the Soviet government on 19 March nor Chamberlain's agreement to secure Soviet benevolent neutrality[821], reflected a genuine change in his attitude towards the Soviet Union or Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration.[822] In fact, the proposal of benevolent neutrality only highlighted the arrogance and indifference of many within the Cabinet including the Prime Minister. Thus, it was expected that Moscow would accept a proposal that involved the Soviet Union being excluded from the diplomatic resistance of aggression until such time that the West felt it acceptable for Moscow to sacrifice its people and country for the sake of others. The anxieties and suspicions of the Soviet government which had been evident during the purges were not considered.[823]

In addition to its arrogant assumption, the Prime Minister did not actually speak in favour of a proposal of neutrality more than three times during the negotiations. It was not really what Chamberlain wanted. He preferred to have no connection with the Soviet government at all. Chamberlain remained opposed to Anglo-Soviet collaboration of any kind because, unlike several

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[820] Ibid, p. 15; Samuel Hoare makes similar remarks about Chamberlain's control in his memoirs. See Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 259; p. 261.
[821] CAB 23/98 Cab. 15. 29 Mar, 1939.
[822] Alexander Cadogan admitted that Chamberlain had not chosen to agree to Soviet proposals, but had in fact been forced to initiate relations with the Soviets 'to placate our left-wing in England...' CAB 27 / 624 43 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939; Minute by Sir A. Cadogan. 1 Feb, 1939. no. 76. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[823] Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 235-6.

ministers, he refused to believe that Moscow would abandon negotiations with the West. This reflected his arrogance, his belief that the Soviet Union needed Britain, and, more specifically, his rejection of the very possibility of a German-Soviet rapprochement.[824] Chamberlain remained indifferent to the Soviet position.[825] When Hore-Belisha and MacDonald both raised the possibility that Stalin and Hitler might ally during a Cabinet meeting, Chamberlain dismissed their points stating that 'no decision was called for at the present time.'[826] Joseph Kennedy, the American ambassador to Britain, wrote that the Prime Minister felt he could 'make a deal with Russia at any time...but is delaying...'[827] Nothing, therefore, had persuaded him to put aside his suspicion and animosity. The Home Secretary remembered after the war that 'Chamberlain began by doubting the possibility of any satisfactory pact with a Government whose motives he continually suspected.'[828] Subsequently, he was 'constantly declaring that the Russians could not be trusted.'[829] Chamberlain still believed that the Soviet Union was 'afraid of Germany and Japan, and would be delighted to see other people fight them.'[830] Later, the Soviet government would watch while the allies fought Germany. At the time Chamberlain made such comments, however, no evidence existed on which to base such suspicion. Despite entering negotiations with the Soviets, Chamberlain also continued to vent his ideological distrust to his sisters, writing; 'I distrust her motives, which seem to me to have little connection with our ideas of liberty, and to be concerned only with getting everyone else by the ears.'[831] In 1939, Moscow's aim, in Chamberlain's opinion, remained Communist expansion. Negotiations and

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[824] Parker, *Appeasement*, p. 225.
[825] Ibid; CAB 23/99 Cab 26. 3 May, 1939.
[826] Ibid.
[827] Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939, Vol. I, pp. 139 - 40. Hereafter referred to as, for example, FRUS 1939, 1, pp.
[828] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 351.
[829] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 370.
[830] Feiling, *Chamberlain*, p. 408.
[831] Ibid, p. 403.

proposals of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance were simply another means to achieve this aim. He wrote, 'I can't believed that she has the same aims and objects as we have, or any sympathy with democracy as such.'[832]

Such vehement opposition to collaboration with the Soviets, as shown by Chamberlain's private papers, proves the inaccuracy of the statement made by Simon, in the House of Commons. He had assured all that '...no sort of desire to exclude Russia ...' existed.[833] In fact, the Prime Minister was supported in the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee by the William Morrison[834] , Thomas Inskip[835] , Alexander Cadogan, and Lord Chatfield.[836] These ministers opposed an Anglo-Soviet alliance because they , too, had not yet been persuaded to overlook their deeply held distrust of Moscow's intentions. Morrison argued that Moscow's proposal of a mutual alliance did not imply 'any sincere desire to help us.'[837] Inskip accused the Soviet government of trying to deliberately entangle Britain in a war with Germany.[838] Cadogan referred to Soviet proposal for a mutual alliance as a 'paper commitment by Russia to join in a war on our side...' and thought it 'extremely inconvenient.'[839] Though he had acknowledged that if the British government rejected an alliance with Moscow 'the Soviet might make some "non-intervention" agreement with the German government', Cadogan dismissed the threat as 'a very remote one.'[840] Lord Chatfield, like

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[832] Ibid, p. 408.
[833] Col. 135. 13 Apr, 1939. 346 HC Deb 5s.
[834] CAB 27/624 43 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939; It is important to note that Morrison did not join the Foreign Policy Committee until 1939 when he became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Although, as minister for agriculture in 1938 he did attend Cabinet meetings, he made no comment on Anglo-Soviet relations during the Czech crisis. He is not names specifically as ever favouring cooperation with the Soviets, unlike Hoare and Halifax. As a result, it is fair to assume that Morrison remained throughout Chamberlain's premiership a loyal supporter of the Prime Minister's policies towards the Soviet Union.
[835] Ibid.
[836] CAB 23/98 Cab 12. 18 Mar, 1939; CAB 27/624 38 mtg. 27 Mar, 1939.
[837] CAB 27 / 624 43 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939.
[838] Ibid.
[839] Ibid; Minute by Sir A. Cadogan. 1 Feb, 1939. no. 76. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[840] Ibid.

Chamberlain, deliberately misreported the findings of the Chiefs of Staff in order to portray the Soviet Union as militarily worthless.[841]

Initially, Chatfield failed to acknowledge that the Chiefs of Staff had compared the value of Poland and the Soviet Union, and concluded that Soviet involvement was of greater importance than a guarantee to Warsaw.[842] Following this, the Minister for Coordination of Defence simply lied and, in complete contrast to the report presented on 18 March, told the Foreign Policy Committee that the Chiefs of Staff believed that 'on the whole Poland was, from the military point of view, probably the best of potential allies.'[843] Chatfield may have been unaware of the report given by the Chiefs of Staff dated 28 March, but the report dated 18 March, which included the explicit comparison of Polish and Soviet value, had been presented directly to him. What, therefore, motivated the Minister to misinform the Cabinet? One suggestion is that such a decision reflected Chatfield's own hostility towards the Soviet Union and opposition to an agreement. However, this does not seem likely. Chatfield may have personally opposed collaboration with the Soviets, but he would not have taken it upon himself to hide the facts, especially from Neville Chamberlain. As Minister for Coordination of Defence, Chatfield did not have the authority nor the influence to make such a crucial decision alone. Rather, what evidence suggests is that the Minister was complying with the instructions of one who was determined to avoid an alliance with Moscow and who possessed the influence to make such decisions, namely Neville Chamberlain.

Unlike Chamberlain, however, Chatfield's portrayal of the Soviet Union and his attitude towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration did not remain consistent. On the one hand he argued that 'the assistance which Russia could bring to bear was

[841] CAB 23/98 Cab 12. 18 Mar, 1939 ; CAB 27/624 38 mtg. 27 Mar, 1939.
[842] Ibid.
[843] Ibid.

not nearly as great as certain quarters represented it to be'[844] , and yet on the other he asserted the 'importance of Russia as a deterrent to Hitler.'[845] He also noted Soviet value in deterring forces in the East.[846] Such contradictory statements were similarly made by the Foreign Secretary. Though pointing out the impossibility of an Anglo-Soviet agreement for a number of reasons, including Poland's opposition[847] and its alleged propensity to make war inevitable[848], Halifax at other times appeared willing to compromise with Moscow and stated his determination to reach an agreement.[849] Following the Soviet proposal for a conference at Bucharest on 19 March, for example, the Foreign Secretary told the Cabinet that 'if M. Litvinoff attached considerable importance to his proposed conference, it might be necessary to see whether we could not get somewhat closer to the Soviet point of view in this respect.'[850] Thereafter, he informed the Soviet government that he personally supported Anglo-Soviet cooperation.[851] He thought it desirable for the allies to 'try to get as much assistance from Russia as was practicable'[852] because the Soviet Union could be of the 'utmost value in the case of war.'[853] Later, Halifax told ministers that he was 'determined to go to very great lengths to obtain' an agreement.[854] The Foreign Secretary, then, was concerned that the Soviet government should not be made to feel it was being deliberately excluded. Indeed, at times, he appeared desperate not to offend the Soviet government.[855] He told Bonnet, that it would be unfortunate to give Moscow 'the idea that we were pushing her

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[844] CAB 23/99 Cab 24. 26 Apr, 1939.
[845] CAB 27/627 82 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939.
[846] Ibid.
[847] Halifax to Phipps. 21 Apr, 1939. no. 247. D.B.F.P.,3, V.
[848] CAB 27 / 624 43 mtg. 19 Apr, 1939.
[849] CAB 23/98 Cab. 14. 22 Mar, 1939.
[850] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 351; CAB 23 / 98 Cab. 14. 22 Mar, 1939.
[851] CAB 27 / 627 71 mtg.
[852] Record of an Anglo-French Conversation, held in the Prime Minister's Room at the House of Commons, 22 Mar, 1939. no. 484. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[853] Halifax to Phipps. 21 Apr, 1939. no. 247. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[854] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 351; CAB 23 / 98 Cab. 14. 22 Mar, 1939.
[855] Halifax to Seeds. 6 May, 1939. no. 401. D.B.F.P., 3, V.

to one side.'[856] Consequently, 'he would take what steps were possible to keep in with Russia.'[857] Such continued emphasis upon the necessity of maintaining good relations with the Soviet government was influential. Thus, Halifax prevented the complete exclusion of Moscow during March and April, something Chamberlain desired. To this extent, Halifax was not in complete agreement with Chamberlain's attitude towards the issue of Anglo-Soviet collaboration.[858] At the same time, however, and despite his efforts to ensure the Soviet government did not feel excluded, Halifax accepted the idea of a conference similar to that of Munich at the beginning of May.[859] The conference was proposed by Pope Pius XII in order to discuss the threat of war.[860] It would include both the German and Italian governments but exclude Soviet representatives. Both Oliver Harvey and Alexander Cadogan, noted the proposal in their diaries.[861] Harvey recorded, 'H [alifax] is very interested says we cannot possibly refuse.'[862] Though the conference was never held, Halifax's response to the suggestion revealed the fragility of his support for closer Anglo-Soviet relations at the time.

How can one explain such contradictory attitudes exemplified by Halifax and Chatfield? They reflected the internal struggle ministers were experiencing, faced with their negative views of the Soviet Union on the one hand and their

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[856] Record of an Anglo-French Conversation, held in the Prime Minister's Room at the House of Commons, 22 Mar, 1939. no. 484. D.B.F.P., 3, IV.
[857] Roberts, *Holy Fox*, pp. 145-146.
[858] In contrast to the portrayal of Halifax as a supporter of Chamberlain's policies in general, A. Roberts contends that Halifax and Chamberlain struggled over the issue of Anglo-Soviet relations during this period. A more convincing contention would be that the Foreign Secretary had differences of opinion with the Prime Minister regarding, for example, the maintenance of good Anglo-Soviet relations. However, until May, it is important to note that Halifax agreed with Chamberlain's rejection of a *mutual alliance*. See Roberts, *Holy Fox* p. 156; Lord Birkenhead, *Halifax. The Life of Lord Halifax*, (London, 1965) pp. 420-421; Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet*, (London, 1971), pp. 263-6.
[859] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 288. 5 May, 1939.
[860] John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope - The Secretary History of Pius XII*, (London, 1999), p. 224.
[861] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 287. 4 May, 1939; Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 178-9. 5 May, 1939.
[862] Ibid.

increasing realisation of Moscow's growing importance on the other. With regard to Halifax in particular, it is likely that his acceptance of the Pope's proposal at the beginning of May reflected his own religious conscience. Ministers were aware that both the Church of England and the Catholic Church harboured hostility towards the Soviet Union during this period.[863] At the beginning of May, Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, Britain's only Cardinal, privately wrote to Halifax to express his anxiety about Communism in Europe.[864] The Foreign Secretary was himself a member of the High Anglican church and had a great, private distaste for Soviet atheism.[865] His religious beliefs made it very difficult for him to overcome the moral doubts concerning an Anglo-Soviet alliance.[866] Nevertheless, neither Halifax nor Chatfield could ignore Moscow's increasing potential influence upon the future of international affairs. In particular, they too could not completely overlook the possibility of the Kremlin choosing to cooperate with Nazi Germany. Such acknowledgement of the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement had been fundamental in loosening the grip of ideological and political mistrust in the minds of several within the Cabinet who had then urged an agreement of some kind with the Soviets. In Halifax's opinion, the possibility of a German-Soviet rapprochement remained 'bare'[867] , and consequently he continued to oppose an alliance between London and Moscow. Nevertheless, he had acknowledged the possibility, and it was this underlying anxiety which had began to force a shift in the Foreign Secretary's anti-Soviet prejudices and cause him to feel torn.

By the end of April, 1939, then, Chamberlain still had significant support in his opposition to an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. Ideological suspicion dominated

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[863] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 26. 3 May, 1939; Cab 30. 24 May, 1939.
[864] Ibid.
[865] Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 167.
[866] Colvin, *Chamberlain Cabinet*, p. 271.
[867] CAB 23/99 Cab 26. 3 May, 1939.

the foreign policy decision making process with regard to the Soviet Union. The period between March and April, however, was crucial. The dominance of such suspicion was shifting, albeit slowly. Ministers and officials, to varying degrees, had at least begun to consider an agreement with Moscow. Such decisions had been taken without knowing the views of the Chiefs of Staff in their entirety. When in May, the Chiefs of Staff were finally allowed to put forward their views with regard to an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance in particular, it would take very little time for ministers and officials to decide to overlook their anti-Soviet prejudices altogether.

Chapter Six:

Attitudes of the British Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and the Chiefs of Staff towards the Soviet Union, May 4 - August 24, 1939.

Attitudes towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration changed dramatically between May and August 1939. For the first time, nearly all the members of the Cabinet, the Foreign Policy Committee and the Chiefs of Staff supported an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. Chamberlain was alone in his opposition to such an agreement. Yet the negotiations failed and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. Neville Chamberlain must bear most responsibility for Britain's failure to secure a Soviet ally because he undermined the greatest opportunity for a successful conclusion of negotiations in May. Ultimately, however, negotiations failed because, with the exception of the Chiefs of Staff and Oliver Stanley, all members of the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee, chose during the final weeks to allow their ideological suspicion of the Soviet Union once more to dominate the foreign policy decision making process.

On 6 May, the British replied to the Soviet proposal of 18 April. Moscow received the British counter proposal on 8 May. Again it stated that the Soviet government should declare its willingness to aid those countries in eastern Europe who desired it in the event of war. This time, however, it was proposed that Moscow would not have to make such a declaration until after Britain and France had gone to war with Germany themselves. On 15 May, Moscow rejected the British proposal and again demanded a triple alliance on the reasoning that British proposals left the Soviet Union exposed to a direct attack by Germany via the Baltic States without any guarantee.[868] Still another attempt

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[868] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* pp. 289-90. 16 May, 1939; Halifax to Seeds. 6 May, 1939. no. 397; Seeds to Halifax. 9 May, 1939. no. 421 ; Seeds to Halifax. 15 May,1939. no. 520; Seeds to Halifax. 16 May, 1939. no. 530. D.B.F.P., 3, V.

was made to secure an independent declaration of assistance from the Soviet government. On 17 May, Robert Vansittart repeated the British proposal to Maisky , adding the incentive of staff conversations.[869] On 19 May, Maisky reported that the new Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov would accept nothing less than a triple alliance.[870] The rejection of the British proposals created a dilemma for the government. A breakdown of the negotiations now had to be faced.[871] Finally, on 24 May, Chamberlain agreed to an Anglo-French- Soviet alliance, although it was to be in accordance with article sixteen of the League Covenant.[872] On 27 May, Molotov received Britain's new proposal.[873] He rejected these terms. The Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs objected to the addition of Article sixteen.[874] The Foreign Office instructed the British ambassador in Moscow to arrange a meeting with Molotov as soon as possible and stress the British support for a conclusion to the negotiations. On 2 June Molotov put forward Moscow's new proposals. As well as demanding a triple alliance he made two new demands. The first was an agreement to guarantee all of the states between the Baltic and the Black Seas. Aggression against any of the countries would invoke the treaty. In addition, the Soviets also now proposed the simultaneous entry into force of the political and military agreements, and a clause that the three powers would not make a separate peace.[875] Before the terms were received in London, it was announced that Germany and the Soviet Union were to sign a commercial agreement.[876]

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[869] Extract from a minute by Sir R. Vansittart. 16 May, 1939. no. 527. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[870] CAB 27/625 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939.
[871] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 354.
[872] CAB 23/99 Cab. 30. 24 May, 1939. The reason the alliance was founded upon article 16 of the League Covenant will be discussed later in the chapter.
[873] Halifax to Seeds. 24 May, 1939. no. 609; Halifax to Seeds. 25 May, 1939. no. 622; Halifax to Seeds. 25 May, 1939. no. 624; Halifax to Seeds. 25 May, 1939. no. 625; Halifax to Seeds. 29 May, 1939. no. 662. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[874] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 294. 29 May, 1939.
[875] Seeds to Halifax. 27 May, 1939. no. 657 ; Seeds to Halifax. 30 May, 1939. no. 665; Seeds to Halifax. 30 May, 1939. no. 670 ; Seeds to Halifax. 1 June, 1939. no. 681; Seeds to Halifax. 2 June, 1939. no. 697. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[876] Seeds to Halifax. 1 June, 1939. no. 681. Ibid.

The slow progress of negotiations during May caused French ministers to panic as they, and indeed many members of the British cabinet, became increasingly concerned about the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement.[877] No more action was taken by Paris however, and throughout June and July, London was allowed to dictate the direction of the negotiations with Moscow.[878] On 14 June, the British government decided to send a Foreign Office official, William Strang, to Moscow in order to assist William Seeds, who was suffering from influenza.[879] On 15 June, Seeds, Strang and the French ambassador, Paul Emile Naggier, rejected the Soviet proposal and discussed Britain's new proposals with Molotov. Thus assistance would be given to the Soviet Union in the event of a direct attack by Germany, and London was willing to concede that consultations should take place if other states were threatened. The Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs was told, however, that both the British and French governments would act to prevent 'aid' going to countries under attack if not desired. Thus the British and French governments would not accept the Soviet Union violating the independence of surrounding states in the event of war. Indeed, they would take action to prevent such violations conducted under the guise of giving 'aid'. On 16 June, Molotov informed the ambassadors that if a guarantee of the Baltic states could not be agreed to then the Kremlin was willing to return to a simple mutual alliance whereby assistance would be given only in the event of direct attack upon either France, Britain or the Soviet Union.[880] London could not accept such an agreement because it did not provide for assistance in the event of an attack upon one of the countries already guaranteed by Britain, especially Poland.[881] After Molotov once again

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[877] Adamthwaite, *France,* pp. 324-5.
[878] Ibid, p. 326.
[879] Strang , *Home and Abroad,* p. 157.
[880] Ibid, p. 175; Seeds to Halifax. 16 June, 1939. no. 60; Seeds to Halifax. 16 June, 1939. no.66; Seeds to Halifax. 16 June,1939. no. 69 ; Seeds to Halifax. 17 June, 1939. no. 73; Seeds to Halifax. 17 June, 1939. no. 74; Seeds to Halifax. 20 June, 1939. no. 103. D.B.F.P., 3, VI.
[881] Aster, *World War,* pp. 268 -9.

rejected a slightly modified British counter proposal on 22 June , Seeds advised London that it had either to agree to a guarantee of the Baltic states or return to a mutual alliance.[882]

During the following weeks, the issue in contention was the list of countries to be guaranteed. The Foreign Policy Committee finally agreed to Moscow's list of countries, with the condition that Switzerland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands be included as countries of concern to the French and British.[883] The government instructed Seeds that a conclusion to the negotiations should be achieved as soon as possible:

> ...the draft treaty should be as short and simple as possible. It is better that agreement should be quickly reached than that time should be spent in trying to cover every contingency. It is realised that this may leave loopholes in the text and possibly lead to differences of opinion as to the interpretation of the treaty at a later date; but those disadvantages are preferable to a long delay in the conclusion of a treaty.[884]

On 1 July, the British and French ambassadors discussed proposals with Molotov again. The Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs objected to the inclusion of the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Switzerland in the list of states to be guaranteed, stating that the Supreme Soviet had not approved these added states. Perhaps Moscow feared being dragged into a war in the West. What is more likely is that Molotov was simply being irritating.[885] The guaranteed states did not have to be named in any published treaty, they would be included in a secret annex. However, and most importantly, Molotov now demanded that the treaty would be invoked by either direct or indirect aggression. 'Indirect aggression' would mean 'an internal coup d'etat or a reversal of policy in the interests of the aggressor.' The British government received the proposals on 4

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[882] Seeds to Halifax. 23 June, 1939. no. 126; Seeds to Halifax. 24 June, 1939. no. 139. D.B.F.P., 3, VI.
[883] CAB 27 / 625 54 mtg. 26 June, 1939.
[884] Ibid.
[885] Carley, *The Alliance*, p. 168.

July.[886]

On 6 July, Seeds was told that the British government would agree not to include the Netherlands, Switzerland or Luxembourg if Moscow abandoned their definition of indirect aggression. The British government was willing to aid a guaranteed state in the event of a direct attack on an obvious abandonment of its neutrality or independence. If this could not be accepted by the Soviet government then a triple alliance could still be concluded. On 8 and 9 July, negotiators discussed the British counter proposal and Molotov offered an alternative definition of indirect aggression. The alternative defined 'indirect aggression' as action accepted;

> ...under threat of force by another power, or without any such threat, involving the use of territory and forces of the state in question for purposes of aggression against that state or against one of the contracting parties, and consequently involving the loss of, by that state, its independence or violation of its neutrality.[887]

In addition, Molotov now demanded that both political and military agreements be signed simultaneously. The French government accepted the new Soviet definition of 'indirect aggression'. The British took longer.[888] The issue of Article six - a simultaneous signing of both political and military agreements - was debated throughout July, within the British government, and between London and Paris.[889] On 18 July, the French government urged London to accept Molotov's latest demand with regard to article six.[890] London finally agreed and

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[886] Seeds to Halifax. 2 July, 1939. no. 207; Seeds to Halifax. 1 July, 1939. no. 221; Seeds to Halifax. 4 July, 1939. no. 225; Seeds to Halifax. 4 July, 1939. no. 227. D.B.F.P., 3, VI; CAB 27 / 625 56 mtg. 4 July,1939.

[887] Seeds to Halifax. 10 July, 1939. no. 282. D.B.F.P., 3, VI.

[888] Seeds to Halifax. 9 July, 1939. no. 279; Seeds to Halifax. 10 July, 1939. no. 281; Seeds to Halifax. 10 July, 1939. no. 282.; Notes from French Embassy, 18 July, 1939. no. 346; Notes from French Embassy, 19 July, 1939. no. 357. Ibid.

[889] Halifax to Seeds. 12 July, 1939. no. 298; Seeds to Halifax. 18 July, 1939. no. 338. Ibid; CAB 27 / 625 57 mtg. 10 July, 1939.

[890] Aster, *World War,* pp. 286-7; Notes from French Embassy, 18 July, 1939. no. 346; Notes from French Embassy, 19 July, 1939. no. 357. D.B.F.P., 3, VI.

on 23 July, the British and French ambassadors informed Molotov.[891] The Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs suggested that the issue of indirect aggression might cease to be a problem once military talks began. On 25 July, Halifax informed Seeds that the British government was ready to agree to immediate initiation of military conversations at Moscow.[892]

During the first two weeks of May, those who had been calling for an agreement with the Soviet government since March continued to do so. Samuel Hoare, Malcolm MacDonald and Oliver Stanley all wanted an agreement to be concluded sooner rather than risk the breakdown of negotiations. Although not a very influential voice, Hoare and others were joined in their support of an agreement by a new member of the Foreign Policy Committee, Leslie Burgin, the recently created Minister of Supply.[893] The ambiguity surrounding exactly what form of agreement such men supported most likely enabled Chamberlain to ignore their protests.[894] Nevertheless, the ministers maintained their support. MacDonald, for example, urged Halifax to meet Molotov in Geneva in order to ensure the continuation of negotiations.[895] Hoare challenged and dismissed what he felt to be unsubstantiated political points being put forward by those who simply opposed closer Anglo-Soviet collaboration. In particular, Hoare did not accept the excuse that Franco's hostility towards Moscow and the strategic importance of Spain ruled out an Anglo-Soviet alliance. He told the Foreign Policy Committee that 'he did not attach importance to the argument that by doing so [accepting Soviet proposals of an alliance] we should alienate Spain and throw her into the German-Italian camp. Spain was already in the anti-Comintern camp.'[896]

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[891] Halifax to Seeds. 22 July, 1939. no.378. Ibid; CAB 27/625 57 mtg. 10 July, 1939.
[892] Seeds to Halifax. 24 July, 1939. no. 414; Seeds to Halifax. 24 July, 1939. no. 416; Halifax to Seeds. 25 July, 1939. no. 435. D.B.F.P., 3, VI.
[893] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 27. 10 May, 1939; CAB 27/625 47 mtg 16 May, 1939.
[894] Hill, *Cabinet Decisions*, p. 40.
[895] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 27.10 May, 1939.
[896] CAB 27 / 625 47mtg.16 May, 1939.

Less than a week after this meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee, Hoare, MacDonald, Stanley and indeed most of the Cabinet were willing to openly support a full and unambiguous Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. The turning point in their attitudes towards collaboration with Moscow was due to a report given by the Chiefs of Staff on 16 May. In this report, the threat of a German-Soviet rapprochement was, for the first time, portrayed as a very real possibility which would have disastrous consequences. An Anglo-French-Soviet alliance, and nothing less, therefore, needed to be secured. The Chiefs of Staff wanted a 'pact', 'something more than the bare neutrality of Russia...' [897] On 10 May, the Chiefs of Staff had agreed that an alliance would have negative effects upon a strategically important Spain. But, they had also reported clearly that an alliance with Moscow could only be rejected if it was absolutely certain that a German - Soviet rapprochement was impossible.[898] On 16 May, they argued that such an assurance of continued hostility between Berlin and Moscow was not possible:

> If we fail to achieve any agreement with the Soviet, it might be regarded as a diplomatic defeat which would have serious military repercussions, in that it would have the immediate effect of encouraging Germany to further acts of aggression and of ultimately throwing the U.S.S.R. into her arms.[899]

The Chiefs of Staff explained that 'the greatest danger we had to face would be a combination of Russia and the Axis Powers.'[900] 'From the military point of view

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[897] CAB 53/11 C.O.S 295 mtg. 16 May, 1939; CAB 53/11 C.O.S 296 mtg. 16 May, 1939; CAB 27 / 625 47mtg. 16 May, 1939.

[898] CAB 53/49 C.O.S. 902 mtg. 10 May, 1939. The report given by the chiefs of staff on 10 May has caused much debate amongst historians. Williamson Murray, for example, highlights the report as an example of the chiefs of staff's inconsistency during this period. Anita Prazmowska argues that such inconsistency can be justified by the political nature of the report. It is the contention of this thesis, however, that the report was in fact wholly consistent with the previous arguments of the chiefs of staff, namely, that an acceptance of Soviet proposals should be determined by whether continued hostility between Moscow and Berlin could be guaranteed. See, Murray, *Balance of Power,* p. 446; Prazmowska, *Poland,* pp. 143-4.

[899] CAB 53/11 C.O.S 295 mtg.16 May, 1939 ; CAB 53/11 C.O.S. 296 mtg. 16 May, 1939; CAB 27/625 47 mtg 16 May, 1939.

[900] Ibid

such an eventuality would create a most dangerous situation' for Britain.[901] Consequently, other considerations, such as the strategical importance of Spain, were put aside. They reiterated their opinion in a Cabinet meeting on 17 May, explaining that,

> ...the danger which would result from possible Russo-German combination outweighed the disadvantages which might be expected to result from the hostile reactions of Spain, Portugal, Italy, Japan and possible other countries, to an agreement between this country and Russia.[902]

Though the fear of a German - Soviet rapprochement had finally persuaded the Chiefs of Staff to overlook their distrust and hostility towards the Soviet Union, it did not mean that such historical feelings had disappeared altogether. Thus, despite agreeing to an alliance, the Chiefs of Staff did not, in May, agree that Britain and France should guarantee the states of central and eastern Europe. If, they pointed out, Germany attacked Latvia, Moscow could declare war against Germany yet stay behind its frontiers leaving Britain obliged to go to war. The Soviet Union, they suspected, was still capable of acting deliberately against the interests of the British and French.[903]

Despite this reservation, however, the report dated 16 May had a significant effect on ministers and officials.[904] The Foreign Secretary was one example. Throughout most of May, Halifax had continued to support Chamberlain's decisions to reject Soviet proposals for a mutual alliance. He believed the British proposal of a unilateral declaration was fair and 'failed to see how there was any just ground for maintaining that our proposal denied the principle of

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[901] CAB 27 / 625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.
[902] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 28 . 17 May, 1939.
[903] CAB 53/11 CO.S. 295 mtg. 16 May, 1939 ; CAB 53/11 C.O.S. 296 mtg. 16 May, 1939; CAB 27/625 47 mtg 16 May, 1939.
[904] Keith Neilson, ' "Pursued by a Bear" British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength 1922 - 1939', *Canadian Journal of History,* Vol. XXVIII, (1993), p. 218.

reciprocity.' Indeed, it was, he believed, 'quite plain that the obligations we were inviting the Soviet government to undertake were identical with those we ourselves had assumed.'[905] In his response to Soviet demands, Halifax was condescending, telling ministers that a mere change of style in the presentation of London's repeated proposal would '...set out our proposal in a way in which it would appeal to Russia...' and make the document 'look more like an Alliance.'[906] The Foreign Secretary's uncompromising position with regard to an actual alliance no doubt reflected his continued denial of a German - Soviet rapprochement as a real threat. He informed the Cabinet during the first weeks of May that;

> ...he had no information bearing on the likelihood of some secret agreement being concluded between Herr Hitler and M. Stalin. He found it difficult to attach much credence to...reports, which might be spread by persons who desired to drive us into making a pact with Russia.[907]

On 24 May, however, eight days after the Chiefs of Staff presented their report to the Foreign Policy Committee, Halifax changed his mind and told others that there was 'great force in the view that, having gone so far in the negotiations, a breakdown now would have a definitely unfavourable effect.' He felt that 'it was therefore necessary that we should be prepared to enter into a direct mutual agreement with the Soviet government.'[908]

Halifax's adviser, Alexander Cadogan, similarly noted in his diary that 'we are coming up against a choice between a Soviet alliance [or pact for mutual assistance] and breakdown - with all consequences.' 'My opinion', he continued, 'is hardening in favour of the former.'[909] Another who changed his mind was Samuel Hoare. Hoare who had spoken out in favour of an agreement previously,

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[905] Halifax to Seeds. 11 May, 1939. no. 494. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[906] CAB 27/625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.
[907] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 27 . 10 May, 1939
[908] Ibid. Cab. 30. 24 May, 1939; Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 157; p. 159.
[909] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 181-2. 19 May, 1939.

now announced his unreserved support for an 'alliance with Russia.'[910] Oliver Stanley complained at what he saw as the government deliberately dragging out the negotiations and also called for a full Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. So, too, did Lord Chatfield.[911] During the first weeks of May, Chatfield had continued to support Chamberlain's rejection of Soviet proposals, despite acknowledging the strategic value of a Soviet ally. He had stressed what he believed would be the disastrous effect of an alliance upon Franco's Spain, telling ministers that 'close relations with the Soviet would not justify alienating strategically important countries like Spain and Portugal.'[912] Yet on 16 May, the Minister for Coordination of Defence changed his mind completely and argued for a mutual alliance to be signed with Moscow as soon as possible.[913]

Of less influence within the government, but nevertheless significant, was the changing attitudes of now Secretary of State for the Dominions, Sir Thomas Inskip, the Marquis of Zetland, and Stanhope. All were also now willing to at least consider an alliance.[914] On 19 May, Inskip, for example, suggested to the Foreign Policy Committee that Hitler would not be likely to draw any distinction in his reactions between an Anglo-Soviet alliance and a lesser agreement.[915] Zetland and Stanhope, like many others, still had reservations about allying with Moscow. Nevertheless, both ultimately agreed that the British government 'might have to go some way in order to prevent a possible agreement between Russia and Germany.'[916]

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[910] CAB 27/625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.
[911] Ibid.
[912] CAB 27 / 624 46 mtg 10 May, 1939.
[913] CAB 27/625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939. It has been suggested by Christopher Hill that Chatfield changed his mind because of his misrepresentation of the chiefs of staff's views in the past. There is no evidence to support this interpretation however. It is unlikely that the Minister for Coordination of Defence would change his mind regarding foreign policy and oppose the Prime Minister during such a crucial period because he felt regretful; Hill, *Cabinet Decisions,* p. 65.
[914] CAB 23 / 99 Cab 28. 17 May, 1939; CAB 27/625 48 mtg 19 May, 1939.
[915] Ibid; Hill, *Cabinet Decisions,* pp. 66-67.
[916] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 28.17 May, 1939.

By May, ministers and officials still voiced their hostility towards the Soviet government. Cadogan accused Moscow of 'blackmail' and found the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, to be uncompromising.[917] The Foreign Secretary believed 'the Russian government had been very tiresome during the negotiations"[918] and expressed his 'strongest possible distaste for a policy which meant our acquiescing in Soviet blackmail and bluff.'[919] Such critical words partly reflected the increasing panic amongst ministers. Several were beginning to realise it was no longer in Britain's interest to drag out the negotiations. Interestingly, a number of ministers pointed out that an alliance was the only possible form of agreement because the British proposal of a unilateral declaration did not deal with the issue of reciprocity.[920] But the same ministers had conveniently overlooked this point throughout March and April. It was not concern for the Soviet position that motivated the change in attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration. It was instead the real belief in the possibility of a German-Soviet rapprochement that finally persuaded the majority to overlook their personal aversion to the Soviet Union to the extent that they were now willing to enter into an alliance of mutual assistance.

The distinction between *changing*, and *putting aside*, one's suspicion and hostility is an important one. Ministers and officials acknowledged the distinction as well as the influence of their suspicion regarding German - Soviet relations. Chatfield, for example, told the Foreign Policy Committee members that 'his colleagues would realise how distasteful it was to him personally to contemplate an alliance with the Soviet', but warned that 'if for fears of making an alliance with Russia we drove that country into the German camp we should

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[917] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 181 -2. 19 May, 1939.
[918] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 30. 24 May, 1939; Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 157; p. 159.
[919] CAB 27/625 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939.
[920] Ibid. 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.

have made a mistake of vital and far reaching importance.'[921] Alexander Cadogan complained that the decision to ally with the Soviet Union was against his 'will', yet accepted the need for such an alliance to ensure Moscow did not 'go in with Germany'.[922] Cadogan had earlier received information stating that 'certain members of the German General Staff are in favour of an understanding with the Soviet Union' and in May he noted that 'they have lately again been advocating it.'[923] Stanhope admitted that if a rapprochement 'were a real possibility' it would, in his opinion, be 'an overriding consideration'.[924] Halifax told the Cabinet that he had 'never disguised his own views on the subject of close association with Russia' but now supported an alliance because 'the idea of some rapprochement between Germany and Russia was not one which could be altogether discarded.'[925] Hoare explained that he had become 'more and more impressed by the serious consequences which would ensue from a breakdown of the negotiations,'[926] and in his memoirs spoke of 'setting aside' anti-Soviet prejudices.[927] Stanley 'thought that the political consequences at home and abroad of a further rejection by Russia of our proposals would be most damaging and unfortunate.'[928] He added during the following meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee, that he 'thought it might also be pointed out...that if no Three Power Pact was made, Russia might well gravitate towards Germany and would not such a development...tend to precipitate a European war?'[929] Even Thomas Inskip, who said little about the Soviet Union during this period, noted in his diary his suspicions that Moscow might ally with Berlin. As early as

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[921] Ibid.
[922] Dilks *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 181-2. 19 May, 1939.
[923] Foreign Office Memorandum on the Anglo-Soviet Negotiations. 22 May, 1939. no. 589. D.B.F.P., 3, V; Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, p. 180.
[924] Stanhope to Halifax 19 May, 1939. PREM 1/490
[925] CAB 23 / 99 Cab 30. 24 May, 1939; Roberts, *Holy Fox*, p. 157; p. 159.
[926] Ibid. Cab. 27. 10 May, 1939.
[927] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 351.
[928] CAB 27 / 625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.
[929] Ibid. 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939.

4 May, he wrote; 'Vatican minister reports that the usual "reliable source" reports that Italy is mediating between Germany and Russia, and that agreement has practically been attained. Italy, Germany and Russia are united. I wonder!'[930]

Hence, by 24 May, nearly the entire Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff and Foreign Policy Committee had changed their attitudes towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration and accepted Soviet proposals for an alliance. What was Chamberlain's view during this period? Despite the anxiety that spread about Soviet foreign policy intentions following Litvinov's removal from office, Chamberlain continued to oppose a mutual alliance with Moscow during the first weeks of May. He remained notably 'reluctant to embrace the Russian bear,'[931] and reiterated his 'most scathing...dislike of the "Bolks" and of Russia.'[932] For the first time he openly admitted to his Cabinet that he 'had some distrust of Russia's reliability...,'[933] and following their presentations on 16 and 17 May, no longer invited the Chiefs of Staff to air their views in Cabinet or Foreign Policy Committee meetings.[934] The changing views of his Cabinet ministers following the report given by the Chiefs of Staff did, however, effect the Prime Minister.

There were other factors now pushing Chamberlain towards accepting Soviet proposals. MI5 intelligence, for example, had recently revealed to the Prime Minister that the Soviet ambassador, Ivan Maisky, had been orchestrating

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[930] Diary entry. 9 May, 1939. Cambridge. INSKP 1/2 . Diaries of Sir Thomas Inskip. Churchill College, Cambridge University.
[931] James, *Chips,* p. 199. 15 May, 1939.
[932] Ibid., p. 197. 5 May, 1939.
[933] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 30 . 24 May, 1939.
[934] Ibid. Cab. 28. 17 May, 1939.

public pressure in favour of an alliance.[935]Chamberlain could not ignore the public opinion polls which were showing overwhelming support for an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance.[936] The British press were also increasing pressure in favour of an alliance.[937] Attitudes towards Soviet involvement were not only changing within Britain either. By the end of May, the two reasons Chamberlain had, to date, continually highlighted to justify his opposition to an alliance, namely east European and dominion opposition, were no longer substantiated. Both Poland and Rumania gave their consent for the British government to negotiate with the Soviets on 22 and 23 May.[938] A number of the dominion governments had already put aside their animosity towards the Soviet Union in order to secure Moscow's military and political commitment to the allies.[939] On 24 May, the Cabinet were informed:

> The High Commissioners for South Africa and Canada had both said that if we were faced with a choice between a breakdown in negotiations and conclusion of an agreement on the terms proposed by the Russian Government they had no doubt that their Government would take the view that we should conclude an agreement. Broadly speaking, apart from New Zealand, all the Dominions appeared to dislike the idea of an agreement with Russia but recognised, nevertheless, that having gone so far it would be right to make an agreement rather than risk a complete breakdown.[940]

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[935] Chamberlain to Hilda. 14 May, 1939. NC 18 / 1/ 1098; Chamberlain to Ida. 21 May, 1939. NC 18 / 1/ 1000; Chamberlain to Hilda 28 May, 1939. NC 18 / 1 / 1101. Cited in D.Cameron Watt, *How War Came,* p. 245

[936] D. Cameron Watt, 'British Domestic Politics and Onset of War, Notes for discussion', *Les Relations Franco-Britanniques de 1935-1939.* Cited in Watt, *How War Came,* p. 245; P. M. H. Bell, *John Bull and the Bear - British Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945,* (New York, 1990).

[937] Cockett, *Twilight,* pp. 115-117.

[938] Kennard to Cadogan, 22 May, 1939. no. 586; Hoare to Cadogan, 23 May, 1939. no. 595. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
It is important to note that the permission to negotiate with Moscow given by the Polish and Rumanian governments at the end of May does not undermine the argument of this thesis that their opposition was cited as an excuse to disguise the real reason for British opposition to an alliance, namely ideological and political distrust. This is because most of the cabinet changed their minds, including the Foreign Secretary, before Warsaw and Bucharest were even asked.

[939] Ovendale, *Appeasement,* pp. 266-74.

[940] CAB 23 /99 Cab.30. 24 May, 1939.

Furthermore, Chamberlain had to consider the change in the international situation. On 22 May, Hitler and Mussolini had signed the Pact of Steel. The two dictators had committed themselves to waging war in common, thus ending the Prime Minister's hope of weaning Mussolini away from Hitler. Potential allies such as France and Turkey now had to be considered.[941] Ultimately, such factors, together with the support for an alliance amongst his own Cabinet, finally forced Chamberlain to accept Soviet proposals on 24 May. 'It must be recognised...', admitted Chamberlain, 'that unless we were prepared to agree substantially to proposals on the lines put forward by the Russian Government, we should have to face a breakdown in negotiations.'[942]

The decision had not been voluntary. Initially, Chamberlain threatened resignation.[943] Then he felt 'disposed to swallow the Soviet desiderata.'[944] Alexander Cadogan told Halifax that the Prime Minister had 'come to this point very reluctantly and is very disturbed at all that it implies.'[945] Hence it is not surprising that the Prime Minister tried to avoid a full alliance with the Soviet Union by basing the agreement upon article sixteen of the League Covenant. Oliver Harvey wrote in his diary that Chamberlain wished the alliance 'to be covered up as much as possible by introducing it into the League machinery, if possible as part of article 16.'[946] In various accounts of the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations this decision has not, to date, received the attention it deserves. It was a premeditated and deliberate act of sabotage by Neville Chamberlain. Basing the alliance upon article sixteen meant that before the assistance pledged by Britain and France could be given, the League Council would have to

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[941] Watt, *How War Came*, p. 245.
[942] Ibid; CAB 23 /99 Cab.30. 24 May, 1939.
[943] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, p. 182.
[944] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, pp. 291-292. 24 May, 1939.
[945] Letter from Cadogan to Halifax. 23 May, 1939. FO 371 / 23066 ; Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 183-4.
[946] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, pp. 291-292. 24 May, 1939; CAB 23/99 Cab. 30. 24 May, 1939.

meet and discuss, and then recommend to the several governments concerned what effective military, naval or air assistance should be given. Thus, the inclusion of article sixteen in the alliance ensured a delay in the assistance given by Britain and France in the event of war. The idea was thought up by Chamberlain and his adviser Horace Wilson in a private meeting.[947] The Prime Minister's boastful description of its origins and implications to his sister revealed that he, in fact, had not overlooked his own distrust of, and hostility towards, the Soviet government, and more importantly that he had not personally accepted a full alliance with the Soviet Union. It was an 'ingenious idea' he wrote;

> In substance it gives the Russians what they want but in form and presentation it avoids the idea of an alliance and substitutes a declaration of *intention* in certain circumstances in fulfilment of an obligation under Art XVI of the Covenant... it is calculated to catch all the misgivings and at the same time by tying the thing up to Art XVI we give it temporary character. I have no doubt that one of these days Art. XVI will be amended or repealed and that should give us the opportunity to revise our relations with the Soviet...'[948]

Henry Channon, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, aptly summarised the insincerity of Chamberlain's proposal when he wrote; 'Thus really, our new obligation means nothing. A military alliance might have been the signal for an immediate war - "blown the gaff" but a Geneva alliance is so flimsy, so unrealistic, and so impractical...'[949] Chamberlain's devious decision to include article sixteen to any terms of agreement destroyed a real opportunity for an alliance between London, Paris and Moscow. The historical debates and existing evidence with regard to Soviet foreign policy during this period will be discussed later in the chapter. But

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[947] Parker, *Appeasement,* p. 230; Watt, *How War Came,* p. 248.
[948] Chamberlain to Hilda. 28 May, 1939. NC 18/1/1101. Chamberlain Papers.
[949] James, *Chips,* p. 201. 24 May, 1939.

evidence does show that Moscow was still sincere in its efforts to reach an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance when Chamberlain undermined the British proposal at the end of May.[950] Years later, M. A. Vyshinky would tell the UN General Assembly of the negative effects Chamberlain's inclusion of article sixteen had upon Soviet decisions and opinions:

> That is why M. Molotov, speaking of the Anglo-French proposal, called them a step forward even in that form, but he noted that there were such reservations, including reservations about certain articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, that it could hardly become an effective step forward..'[951]

Why, in contrast to the vast majority of his Cabinet, the Foreign Policy Committee and the Chiefs of Staff, had Chamberlain remained opposed to a full triple alliance with Moscow and Paris? He may well have still been hankering after an agreement with Germany. Several historians have suggested that Chamberlain never completely abandoned his plans to resume negotiations with the German government regarding European security, particularly a solution to the Danzig and Polish corridor question.[952] Indeed, in May, the Prime Minister complained to his sister that 'an association [with the Soviet Union]... would make any negotiation or discussion with the totalitarians difficult if not impossible.'[953] He believed that Soviet involvement in a policy of collective resistance would act to 'consolidate the relations of the parties to the anti-comintern pact...'[954] Rather than help deter Hitler, which Chamberlain planned, Soviet involvement was thought to make war even more likely.[955] The Prime Minister, then, still hoped for peace, and this was influential, but only

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[950] Roberts, *Soviet Union,* p. 63.

[951] Speech by M. A. Vyshinky in Committee I of the United Nations General Assembly. 25 October, 1947. FO 502/1 59106. *Draft of Documents in Confidential Print,* (not published), p. 116.

[952] Parker, *Appeasement,* p. 219; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled,* pp. 138-139; Murray, *Balance of Power,* p. 363.

[953] Chamberlain to Ida. 21 May, 1939. NC 18 / 1/ 1100. Chamberlain Papers.

[954] CAB 23 / 98 Cab. 15. 29 Mar, 1939. Cipher Telegram no. 56; no. 65.

[955] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 28. 17 May, 1939.

indirectly.[956] Chamberlain's continued hope of an agreement with Hitler was influential only in so much as it meant there was no reason for Chamberlain to put aside the anti-Soviet prejudices that fuelled his opposition to collaboration. If his desire for an Anglo-German agreement had, in fact, been a direct influence upon Chamberlain's aversion to collaboration he would not have accepted the Soviet proposals at the end of May and expected Soviet agreement to his counter proposal.[957] Though he had undermined the prospects for an alliance by including article sixteen, in the eyes of Hitler, indeed all of Europe, it would have appeared that an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance had been concluded.[958]

Distrust and disdain still dominated Neville Chamberlain's opinion of Anglo-Soviet collaboration. By the end of May, the only support he could count upon within the Cabinet and the Foreign Policy Committee was from William Morrison and R. A Butler.[959] Morrison, for example, warned members of the government that the 'lesson of Brest Litovsk must never be forgotten'[960] , thereby revealing that hostility towards the Soviet Union was not only due to Stalin's recent purges. Yet neither he nor Butler were influential. Indeed, Chamberlain did not even recognise Morrison's support, and when he wrote of Butler to his sister, he complained; 'the only support I could get for my views was from Rab Butler...and he was not a very influential ally.[961]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, was suspected by some

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[956] Parker, *Appeasement*, pp. 1-11; Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 380-381.
[957] Chamberlain to Hilda. 28 May, 1939. NC 18 / 1 / 1101. Chamberlain Papers.
[958] CAB 27 / 625 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939; Hill, *Cabinet Decisions*, pp. 66-67. Thomas Inskip points out that Hitler would not draw any distinction in his reaction to an Anglo-Soviet alliance and any lesser agreement.
[959] Chamberlain to Hilda. 28 May, 1939. NC 18/1/1101. Chamberlain Papers; Parker, *Appeasement*, p. 230; R. A. Butler attended two thirds of Foreign Policy Committee meetings after Munich. See Anthony Howard, *RAB: The Life of R*, (London, 1987).
[960] CAB 27/625 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939.
[961] Chamberlain to Hilda. 28 May, 1939. NC 18/1/1101. Chamberlain Papers.

ministers to support Chamberlain's opposition to an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance.[962] He had never spoken out in favour of an alliance and when he did contribute to discussions about the Soviet Union his remarks were critical. On the other hand, however, Simon had made remarks which suggested some support for the Soviet position. Thus, when it was suggested that London should respond to the Soviet Union's repeated rejection of its proposals by extending the 'definition of aggression beyond the scope of physical invasion to cover the violation of a country's political neutrality', Simon pointed out that the proposal

> ...did not really do what Russia asked us to do...It appeared to him that the Russian Government was still entitled to say that we were only undertaking to help Russia if Russia became involved in war as a result of aggression having taken place against Poland or Rumania.[963]

Following this, he agreed with a number of other ministers that Hitler would see very little difference in the proposals being put forward by Vansittart and Moscow's proposal of a three power pact.[964] Consequently, Simon's attitude towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration during this period is very difficult to determine. Indeed, fellow members of the Cabinet and the Foreign Policy Committee themselves were unsure about his personal opinion. Although others listed him with the Prime Minister as one of the 'opposers', a question mark remained alongside his name.[965] Analysing his views is made even more difficult by the fact that he chose not to write about his opinions towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration in his private papers. What one can say, however, is that his views had little influence precisely because neither those who proposed an alliance nor Chamberlain perceived Simon as a supporter.

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[962] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries,* p. 181.
[963] CAB 27/625 47 mtg. 16 May, 1939.
[964] Ibid. 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939.
[965] When, in May, Cadogan listed those opposed to an alliance in his diary, Simon's name was included but with a question mark next to it. See, Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries,* p. 181.

By the end of May, then, Chamberlain had found himself virtually alone in his opposition to a mutual alliance, as specified by Moscow. Within the next three months, however, Chamberlain would once again secure the support of his Cabinet and the Foreign Policy Committee in his opposition to Soviet proposals. The reason for this was Moscow's insistence upon a guarantee of the Baltic states, and in particular, its demand for a clause of indirect aggression.

Chamberlain did not agree to Moscow's demand for a guarantee of the Baltic states at the beginning of June. He did not believe that Moscow was genuinely fearful that the Baltic States might acquiesce in German domination.[966] Instead the Soviet demand supported his suspicion that Soviet intentions remained to expand into eastern Europe.[967] Chamberlain admitted that he might be 'over suspicious of Russian intentions'[968] but he was not willing to change his views. At the same time, however, he could not withdraw the British government from the negotiations altogether. He was aware of the support that still existed for some form of agreement amongst his ministers. 'My colleagues are so desperately anxious for it [an agreement with the Soviet Union] and so nervous of the consequences of failure to achieve it that I have to go warily'[969] he told his sister. Consequently, Chamberlain attempted to hinder negotiations. He was confidant that the Soviet government had no alternative but to agree to an alliance with the British and French. He told the Foreign Policy Committee at the beginning of June that he 'did not think that Russia could now break off negotiations and we could therefore afford to take a fairly stiff line.'[970] So, in meetings, Chamberlain remained either indifferent or antagonistic about the Soviets and their demands.[971] For example, at times of crucial decision making,

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[966] CAB 27 / 625 54 mtg. 26 June, 1939.
[967] Feiling, *Chamberlain*, pp. 408-409; CAB 27/625 50 mtg. 9 June, 1939.
[968] Ibid.
[969] Chamberlain to Hilda. 2 July, 1939. NC 18 / 1 / 1105. Chamberlain Papers .
[970] CAB 27/625 50 mtg. 9 June, 1939.
[971] Ibid.

namely immediately after agreeing to a mutual alliance at the end of May, he was away on holiday.[972] Such behaviour was in stark contrast to Chamberlain's previous efforts to secure an agreement with Germany. He flew to Germany on three separate occasions to ensure the conclusion of an agreement with Hitler over the Sudetenland crisis. Thereafter, he told ministers that 'unless we showed that we were prepared to drive a hard bargain, we should necessarily get the worst of the bargain.'[973]

When, in June, Chamberlain was presented with an opportunity to prove British sincerity to the Soviets by sending a Cabinet minister to assist the British ambassador, he undermined the progress of negotiations by sending an official of the Foreign Office, namely William Strang.[974] He told the House of Commons that he had chosen Strang to go to Moscow in order to 'accelerate the negotiations', and hoped 'by this method it will be possible...to complete the discussion that is still necessary to harmonise the views of the three Governments and so reach a final agreement.'[975] Yet it would have been obvious, even to Chamberlain, that sending a non-prominent official would offend and increase the suspicions of the Soviet government. Moscow's suspicion of British sincerity had been raised on several occasions during Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee meetings during the past weeks.[976] The Prime Minister could and should have sent a Cabinet minister to Moscow, or at least chosen Anthony Eden, who volunteered to represent the British government and had met the Soviet dictator in 1935.[977] Justifications given for Chamberlain's decision by historians since are inadequate.[978] If Hitler had invited a British representative

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[972] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 295. 31 May, 1939.
[973] CAB 27/625 50 mtg. 9 June, 1939.
[974] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 296. 8 June, 1939.
[975] Strang, *Home and Abroad,* p. 157.
[976] CAB 27 / 624 38 mtg. 27 Mar, 1939; CAB 27 / 625 49 mtg. 5 June, 1939.
[977] Chamberlain to Ida. 10 June, 1939. NC 18 /1 / 1102. Chamberlain Papers;Eden, *Dictators*; Eden, *Reckoning*,.
[978] Aster, *World War*, pp. 264-8; Watt, *How War Came,* p. 362.

to negotiate a settlement, even as late as June, there is little doubt that Chamberlain himself would have found the time to fly to Berlin. Strang was a capable and intelligent official. But the reason for Chamberlain's choice was twofold. Firstly, because he remained insincere with regard to securing the Soviet Union as an ally. Secondly, Chamberlain was aware that Strang had been unaffected by the romantic Russophilia which he suspected had affected others, such as William Seeds. Consequently, he believed Strang would be able to withstand the demands and arguments of Molotov and retain London's control of the terms of agreement.[979]

Sending Strang did offend Moscow[980] and by July no agreement had been reached between Britain, France and the Soviet Union. The possibility that an agreement might yet still be reached was undermined even further when Molotov demanded a clause of indirect aggression be included in any guarantee. The Prime Minister refused resolutely. For him, the Soviet demand only confirmed that he had been right all along to distrust Moscow's intentions. What the Soviet government proposed would allow the Soviet Union to take offensive action when it deemed necessary.[981] Chamberlain warned that 'manipulation of internal upheaval in these petty states, whether for a White or Red revolution, had been made familiar in the last war, and would never be difficult to a practised hand.'[982] He warned the Foreign Policy Committee, for example, that the under the new Soviet proposal '...the Soviet government might insist on occupying strategic positions in Finland on the excuse that Finland was acting in the interests of Germany.'[983]

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[979] Ibid., pp. 361-362.
[980] Dalton, *Memoirs*, p. 256.
[981] Feiling, *Chamberlain,* pp. 408-409.
[982] Ibid.
[983] CAB 27/625 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.

When justifying his opposition to the Soviet proposals during the final months of negotiations, Chamberlain would also often refer to the telegrams of Britain's ambassador to Germany, Nevile Henderson.[984] This was quite ironic considering that during the last days of May, Henderson had actually expressed his support of an Anglo-French-Soviet agreement. He was not a consistent supporter of closer Anglo-Soviet relations[985] , but on 28 May, for example, Henderson had written to Halifax, stating; 'If only we could get our Russian agreement through.'[986] Days later he wrote; 'I heartily wish we could quickly and safely get them into the anti-aggression bloc.'[987] Henderson's perceptions of the Soviet Union were very similar to those of Chamberlain and many others. He distrusted the Soviet government[988] and his hostility towards Moscow was evident in a number of telegrams.[989] 'History contains nothing but examples of the unwisdom of putting one's faith into the Slavs'[990] , he told the Foreign Secretary. But he had decided, if only for a short time, to put aside such views. He was not persuaded by a fear of a German - Soviet rapprochement, as were several members of the Cabinet in May. In fact, such a threat featured relatively infrequently in his telegrams. Rather, Henderson's decision was influenced by his belief that an Anglo-French-Soviet agreement would aid his plans to secure an agreement with Hitler. Thus, an agreement, he believed, would 'make our position one hundred per cent stronger and enable us to play from greater strength.'[991]

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[984] Ibid. 57 mtg. 10 July; Though not a member of the cabinet, foreign policy committee or the chiefs of staff, it is because of his close relationship with not only Chamberlain but also Halifax that the attitudes and reports of Henderson deserve, an albeit brief, discussion in this chapter.
[985] Neville, *Appeasing Hitler.*
[986] Henderson to Halifax. 28 May, 1939. FO 800 / 270. Henderson Papers. Public Record Office. Kew.
[987] Ibid. 31 May, 1939.
[988] Ibid.
[989] Ibid. 11 July, 1939.
[990] Ibid. 17 June, 1939. FO 800 / 315.
[991] Ibid. 31 May, 1939. FO 800 / 270.

Importantly, this support for an agreement with the Soviets was conditional. Henderson wanted and needed an agreement immediately. When it did not occur, Henderson demanded an end to the negotiations as soon as possible. Whether an agreement was signed or not, was irrelevant. The priority was to end the negotiations. If London, Paris and Moscow concluded an agreement, Henderson's position in any negotiations with Hitler would be strengthened. If they failed, this would clear all obstruction to an Anglo-German agreement. However, as long as the negotiations dragged on, Britain gained no assurances from the Soviets and the opportunity to negotiate with Hitler would disappear. 'In my opinion', wrote Henderson, 'the important thing was to end the negotiations one way or another as soon as possible.'[992] Thus, as the Soviet government continued to reject British proposals during June and July, Henderson became increasingly hostile and critical.[993] It is likely that Chamberlain deliberately chose to highlight these more negative messages from the ambassador when arguing his own aversion to an alliance with the Soviet Union.

Throughout July, Soviet insistence upon its latest clause of indirect aggression convinced Chamberlain that the negotiations were likely to fail. The Prime Minister did not feel remorse, however. Instead he was indignant that he would have to take responsibility for the failure of negotiations he had never supported. He wrote to his sister Ida to complain:

> We are only spinning out of time before the inevitable break comes and it is rather hard that I should have to bear the blame for dilatory action when if I wasn't hampered by others I would have closed the discussions one way or another long ago.[994]

For some time Chamberlain had become increasingly angry at what he saw as

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[992] Ibid. 11 July, 1939.
[993] Ibid.
[994] Chamberlain to Ida. 23 July, 1939. NC 18 / 1 / 1108. Chamberlain Papers.

the humiliation Britain was suffering.[995] It was, he said, 'most humiliating to have our proposals consistently and summarily rejected.'[996] It is ironic that Chamberlain had never expressed such feelings of humiliation when Britain pursued Hitler for an agreement in September 1938. The Prime Minister, however, had always perceived Germany to be an equal power, deserved of political respect. The Soviet Union, in his opinion, had always been a country inferior to Britain in every way.[997] Indeed, Maisky later admitted that the Soviet government had felt it was treated by Britain 'always like poor relations.'[998] Moscow's rejection of British proposals after May therefore injured Chamberlain's pride. Furthermore,the British Cabinet, as far as he was concerned, 'had made concession after concession and ...there was no point of substance on which we had refused to accept the Russian standpoint.'[999] Several ministers and officials made such a point regarding Britain's proposals during this period. Halifax and Cadogan both felt that Britain 'had gone further than many would have thought right in endeavour to find agreement'[1000] , indeed that London had given 'them [Soviets] all they want...'[1001] The British government had, by 26 June, not only agreed to Moscow's original proposal of a mutual alliance, but also compromised on a guarantee of the Baltic states. However, it had taken nearly three months for London to finally agree to an alliance and a further month to agree to a guarantee. The British government had continually rejected Soviet proposals, remaining indifferent to the security concerns of Moscow. The assumption of ministers during June and July, that the Soviet government would and should be grateful for any compromise on Britain's part

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[995] Ibid; CAB 25 / 625 58 mtg. 19 July, 1939.
[996] Ibid.
[997] Feiling, *Chamberlain*, p. 403.
[998] Dalton, *Memoirs*, p. 256.
[999] CAB 27 / 625 54 mtg. 26 June, 1939.
[1000] Speech as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the 1900 Club, about India and Foreign Policy in Europe. 21 June, 1939. Reel 1, 1.3. Halifax Papers. Churchill College. Cambridge University.
[1001] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 189-93. 20 June, 1939.

showed an incredible, though unsurprising arrogance. Nothing had been learnt from the negotiations. Soviet suspicion of the West had been noted by some, but no thought was given to the possibility that British actions since March had increased the Kremlin's suspicion of London's sincerity to the extent that further compromise would now be needed to prove Britain's genuine willingness to aid the Soviet Union in the event of war.

Cadogan and Halifax were particularly annoyed by Moscow's uncompromising insistence upon its terms of alliance because they had initially worked, in contrast to Chamberlain, to continue negotiations in June. Both had continued to believe an alliance was still possible and so maintained their support for such an agreement. Cadogan, for example, suggested in June that Seeds be recalled and briefed to answer Molotov's questions in Moscow. Such action, he hoped, would prevent the delays so far caused by Seeds having to wait for replies to his questions from the Foreign Office.[1002] At the beginning of June, Halifax agreed to Anthony Eden's proposal to represent the government in Moscow,[1003] and even suggested sending a legal adviser, William Malkin, to aid the drafting of the agreement and smooth the progress of the negotiations.[1004] He remained optimistic an alliance would be reached[1005] and tried to calm the mistrust evoked by the latest proposal. The Foreign Secretary emphasised, for example, Moscow's real concern that the Baltic States might acquiesce willingly in a German takeover.[1006] The government, he said, needed to appreciate Moscow's paranoia.[1007] 'The Russians', he explained,

> ...were extremely suspicious and feared that our real object was to trip them into commitments and then leave them in the lurch. They suffered

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[1002] Ibid, pp. 785-6.
[1003] Chamberlain to Ida. 10 June, 1939. NC 18 / 1 / 1102. Chamberlain Papers
[1004] CAB 23 / 99, Cab. 31. 7 June, 1939.
[1005] CAB 23 / 100 Cab. 33. 21 June, 1939
[1006] CAB 27/625 49 mtg. 5 June, 1939.
[1007] Ibid.

> acutely from inferiority complex and considered that ever since the Great War the Western Powers had treated Russia with haughtiness and contempt.[1008]

Even Halifax, however, could not agree to the Soviet definition of indirect aggression. He found Molotov's definition of 'indirect aggression' to be 'dangerous and capable of very wide application."[1009] Thus, he explained, it

> ...would enable Russia in certain circumstances to intervene in the internal affairs of some other country, where a coup d'etat had occurred. For example, the Iron Guard might revolt in Rumania and the Soviet Government might then allege that Rumanian territory was being used for purposes of aggression against the Soviet government.[1010]

Britain could, therefore be dragged into war. A mutual alliance would ensure that Britain would only go to war for reasons it had already committed to, namely, to protect guaranteed countries against German aggression. A clause of indirect aggression meant that the decision to go to war depended upon Stalin. Halifax, as well as others within the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee, could not trust Stalin not to take action against the interests of Britain. The Foreign Secretary told the Foreign Policy Committee that

> ...he had always had in mind the example which M. Molotoff had given of Estonia wishing to employ German officers to train her Army...the Soviet government would be able to claim that such action by Estonia involved abandonment of her neutrality and if, as a result, Russia became engaged in war with Germany, France and Britain would also become involved in war.[1011]

William Morrison, similarly protested that if '...some totalitarian or right wing regime was established in Latvia, this definition would enable the Soviet government to intervene and drag us in with it.'[1012] Sir John Simon agreed. It was, he told ministers, 'important to insure that we should retain a free hand so

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[1008] Ibid. 54 mtg. 26 June, 1939.
[1009] Ibid. 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.
[1010] Ibid. 57 mtg. 10 July, 1939.
[1011] Ibid. 58 mtg. 19 July, 1939.
[1012] Ibid. 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.

as to be able to tell Russia that we were not bound to go to war because we did not agree with her interpretation of the facts."[1013]

By July, then, most of the Cabinet were resigned to the fact that an agreement could not be found. Since June, individuals had found themselves torn. Molotov's shock demand had led several to question their decision to set aside suspicion of Soviet intentions at the end of May. Hoare, for example,who had consistently spoken out in favour of an agreement and then a mutual alliance with Moscow, said little regarding Anglo-Soviet relations after June. The Soviet government's uncompromising position regarding the clause of indirect aggression in July, made it impossible for ministers and officials to continue ignoring their mistrust, and once again, prejudices began to dominate the foreign policy decision making process.

With the exception of Neville Chamberlain who remained convinced until the 22 August that 'it would be quite impossible for Germany and Soviet Russia to come together'[1014] , ministers and officials were still aware of the threat of a German - Soviet rapprochement. For this reason alone, London continued to negotiate with Moscow and at the end of July, proposed military talks.[1015] Halifax told his colleagues; 'By securing an agreement with Russia we should have safeguarded ourselves for the time being against what might be the most serious danger, namely, an agreement between Germany and Russia...'[1016] An Anglo-French-Soviet agreement now seemed impossible but as long as talks continued, ministers and officials believed the possibility of Moscow allying with Germany would be reduced. But such fear was no longer enough to persuade individuals to set aside their distrust of Moscow to the extent that

[1013] Ibid. 58 mtg. 19 July, 1939.
[1014] Ibid. 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.
[1015] Ibid. 57 mtg. 10 July, 1939.
[1016] Ibid. 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.

they were willing to agree to Soviet proposals. Throughout July, the frustration and hostility that individuals had begun to express in June[1017] , continued and indeed, increased. Halifax had told the Foreign Policy Committee at the beginning of July that 'those who favoured a continuance of the negotiations must realise that this would mean interminable discussions.'[1018] He personally was finding the 'Russian business...quite infuriating'[1019] and wanted an end to the 'perpetual argument.'[1020] He told the British ambassador in Paris that 'it [the negotiations] blocks everything and frays everybody's nerves...I hope...we may succeed in bringing it to a point one way or the other very soon.'[1021] Indeed, he admitted to the Cabinet that 'if the negotiations should, after all, fail, this would not cause him very great anxiety...'[1022] Almost no one spoke out in favour of an alliance.[1023]

Moscow's demand for the guarantee of the states surrounding the Soviet Union evoked once more the suspicion of the British Cabinet. But were the Cabinet right to distrust Soviet intentions throughout 1939? Firstly, one can adequately challenge the suggestion that Stalin's foreign policy was driven by ideology and an intention to expand Communism.[1024] Most recently, Gabriel Gorodetsky has convincingly argued that 'from its first inception, Soviet foreign policy was marked by a gradual but consistent retreat from hostility to the Capitalist regimes towards peaceful coexistence based on mutual expediency.'[1025] There was a steady and consistent erosion of the ideological dimension of Soviet

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[1017] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries,* pp. 189-93. 20 June, 1939.
[1018] CAB 27 / 625 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.
[1019] Letter from Halifax to Phipps. 7 July, 1939. File 1 / 23. Phipps Papers.
[1020] CAB 27 /625 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.
[1021] Letter from Halifax to Phipps. 7 July, 1939. File 1 / 23. Phipps Papers.
[1022] CAB 23 / 100 Cab. 38. 19 July, 1939.
[1023] CAB 27/625 56 mtg. 4 July, 1939.
[1024] Gorodetsky outlines the arguments of those academics who underline the alleged ideological nature of Soviet foreign policy during this period. See, V. Suvorov, *Icebreaker*; R. C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power*. Cited in, Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, pp. 3 -4
[1025] Ibid, p. 1.

foreign policy. Instead, Stalin favoured moderate diplomacy in an effort to ensure, primarily, the safety and future security of his regime. He was opportunistic and his policy remained essentially one of realpolitik.[1026] But was the Soviet dictator sincere in the negotiations with the British and French during 1939? He was not driven by ideology, but had his opportunist outlook led him to move towards an agreement with Berlin, and when exactly was this decision made? Some have argued that Soviet foreign policy plans moved away from collaboration with the British and French as early as October 1938, following the Munich agreement. Pointing to Stalin's speech at the Eighteenth Party Congress, in which he criticised the appeasement policy of the West, other historians have questioned Soviet sincerity towards the negotiations from March 1939.[1027] The British guarantee of Poland which soon followed is noted by others as a significant event. On the one hand historians have argued that it inadvertently ensured the protection of Soviet territory and therefore considerably undermined the value of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance for the Kremlin.[1028] An alliance would most likely lead to war, but if the Soviet government remained neutral there could soon exist an opportunity to gain territory through an agreement with Germany.[1029] On the other hand, the Polish guarantee has been focused upon as a crucial turning point because of its influence on the international balance of power. It is argued that the guarantee led, for the first time, to the emergence of Germany as an alternative ally for the Soviets because it forced Hitler to neutralise Moscow if he intended to carry out his plans with regard to Poland and yet avoid a war on two fronts. At the same time, the guarantee forced the British to secure some form of military aid from the Soviets in case the guarantee was brought into force. Consequently, the

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[1026] Ibid, pp. 2-3; p. 7.

[1027] See D. C. Watt's discussion in his 'The Initiation of the Negotiations Leading to the Nazi-Soviet Pact: A Historical Problem', in C. Abramsky ed. *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr,* (London, 1974). Cited in Roberts, *Soviet Union,* pp. 65-6.

[1028] Ibid.p. 72; Thorne, *Approach of War,* p. 131.

[1029] Ibid. p. 137; Murray, *Balance of Power,* p. 297.

Soviet Union became the key to the European balance of power and could choose its ally. When the British failed to satisfy Soviet security needs, Stalin sought an alternative with Germany.[1030] Both the removal of Maxim Litvinov, and Molotov's increased demands, particularly regarding the guarantee of the Baltic States, appeared for ministers at the time and historians later, to confirm such suspicion that Moscow was no longer interested in securing an alliance with the British and French.[1031]

All of the above interpretations of Soviet insincerity can be challenged. Indeed, each decision can be revealed as evidence of Moscow's continued *sincerity* towards securing an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. Thus, regarding first the suggestion that Stalin's speech in March indicated a change in Soviet foreign policy, it is aptly advised by Geoffrey Roberts that 'no credibility whatsoever should be attached to this particular interpretation.' There were a number of reasons why this was so, but most importantly it is notable that the speech contained 'little that was new or unexpected.'[1032] Litvinov and Molotov had both criticised the western policy of non-intervention many times before. Stalin maintained the distinction between aggressive fascist states and non-aggressive democracies. Hence, the Soviet dictator did not denounce wholesale the British and French. Rather his message simply warned that the Soviet government was not prepared to resist aggression alone and risk its own security in order to ensure the future security of others. [1033]

All assertions of Soviet insincerity, whether argued by highlighting Stalin's speech, the strategical benefits of the Polish guarantee or the removal of

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[1030] Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, pp. 4-7.
[1031] D. C. Watt 'The Initiation of the Negotiations'. Cited in Roberts, *Soviet Union*, pp. 65-6.
[1032] Seeds to Halifax. 20 Mar, 1939. no. 452. D.B.F.P., 3, IV. Cited in Ibid, p. 66.
[1033] Ibid, pp. 66-67; Speech by M. A. Vyshinky in Committee I of the United Nations General Assembly. 25 October, 1947, p. 115. FO 502/1 59106. *Documents in Confidential Print,* (Not published).

Litvinov, are undermined by the fact that the Soviet government continued to work for an Anglo-French-Soviet mutual alliance until the end of July at the earliest.[1034] The Soviet government may have begun to consider the possibility of collaboration with the Germans as early as as March. The Polish guarantee, as Gorodetsky suggests, may have signified the beginning of Moscow contemplating a possible rapprochement with Germany. However, a firm decision to reject an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance was not taken before July. A meeting between the Soviet ambassador in Germany, Alexei Merekalov and Ernst Weizsäcker, State Secretary in the German foreign ministry on 17 April, regarded by several historians as the beginning of Soviet - German détente, was in fact a meeting based upon economic issues, and of no political significance.[1035] Following this, it was the Germans who initiated a policy of rapprochement, trying from 5 May onwards to solicit Moscow away from its policy of alliance with Britain and France. On 5 May, Julius Schnurre, from the economic department of the German foreign ministry, informed Georgi Astakhov, Counsellor at the Soviet embassy in Berlin, that Soviet contracts with Skoda, the munitions company in Bohemia, would be honoured. Berlin continued to put out feelers to Moscow until the end of June. The only indication that Moscow might be interested in reaching an agreement with the Germans before the end of July, occurred at a meeting on 14 June between Astakhov and Draganov, the Bulgarian ambassador in Berlin. Nothing was concluded at the meeting. There was a lull in German advances to Moscow between the end of June and the end of July, but on 24 July, German approaches resumed. It was on 29 July that the Kremlin finally appeared willing to consider a possible political détente with Berlin. For the first time Molotov replied to German overtures welcoming 'any improvement in political relations between the two countries.' A genuine

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[1034] For more discussions on why removal of Litvinov did not signify change in Soviet foreign policy see Roberts, *Soviet Union,* pp. 71-73.
[1035] Ibid, pp. 68-71.

opportunity for the British government to secure the Soviets as an ally had therefore existed throughout the negotiations. It was the behaviour of London towards Moscow during this period that played a significant role in pushing the Soviet government to move towards Germany. The Soviet Commissar was becoming increasingly exasperated with the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations and this, together with what appeared to be the imminent outbreak of war due to rising tension between Germany and Poland over Danzig, is what probably persuaded Moscow to give more attention to German feelers.[1036]

Moscow then, continued to propose, and sincerely desire, a mutual alliance at the very least until the end of July. The reason for this was that the Polish guarantee did not, despite all of the assumptions[1037] , ensure Soviet security from a German attack. Throughout the negotiations, the Soviet government became increasingly concerned about the possibility of a German attack bypassing Poland and Rumania and directed at the north of the Soviet Union through the Baltic States.[1038] Litvinov, had first attempted to include the Baltic States in an eastern defensive bloc as early as March 1939, but to no avail. Consequently, on 28 March Soviet declarations were made to both the Latvia and Estonian governments warning them that any agreement with a third power that diminished their independence would violate their existing non-aggression pacts with Moscow. But the Estonians and Latvians rebuffed the Soviet warning, and Estonia soon began to move towards a non-aggression pact with the Germans.[1039] This together with Latvia's apparent doubts about British and

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[1036] Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, p. 6; For a detailed account of German - Soviet relations during this period see Roberts, *Soviet Union*, pp. 73-82. Such events confirm Gorodetsky's contention; 'Clearly the dynamic force behind events since Munich was Germany.' See, *Grand Delusion*, p. 7.

[1037] Gorodetsky lists a number of statements from British ministers and officials citing their predictions and beliefs that a Polish guarantee would lead Stalin to move towards an agreement with Berlin. See Ibid. p. 5.

[1038] CAB 25 / 625 58 mtg 19 July, 1939; Watt, *How War Came*, p. 363.

[1039] Ibid, pp. 223-4.

French capabilities and sincerity, and the fact that Lithuania's independence now appeared vulnerable following the loss of Memel to Germany, only increased Soviet anxiety. On 20 April, at Hitler's birthday parade in Berlin, it was observed that both the chiefs of staff of the Estonian and Latvia armies were present.[1040] Finally, on 7 June, Soviet security fears were realised when both Estonia and Latvia concluded non-aggression pacts with Germany.

Thus, the Soviet government was not negotiating from a position of strength or confidence, and this was confirmed through the demands made for the guarantee of the Baltic States. Rather than revealing Soviet insincerity regarding a policy of collective resistance with the West, the demands were made because Moscow had tirelessly worked, yet ultimately failed, to ensure a guarantee of assistance from the British and French in the event of a German attack on the Soviet Union, under any circumstances. In 1947, M. A. Vyshinky succinctly explained the reasons for the Soviet demand of a mutual assistance pact between Britain, France and the Soviet Union, and guarantees to the Baltic States. The British proposal for mutual aid at the end of May, he said, was 'accompanied by such reservations, the effect of which was to nullify these proposals.' He went on:

> The new proposals provided for help to the Soviet Union with regard to five countries to which Britain and France had already given guarantees, but there was no mention of help by Britain and France to three countries bordering on the Soviet Union, namely, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Clearly, the situation was as follows: that the aggressor, the potential aggressor at that time, was of course Hitler. When Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union were conducting conversations about the future aggressor they then, of course, had Hitler in mind. Well, look at this beautiful picture. Britain and France gave guarantees to Czechoslovakia and Poland, but they did not wish to give any guarantee

[1040] Seppo Myllieniemi, *Baltian Kriisi, 1938-1941,* (Helsinki, 1977), p. 39, citing Finnish Foreign Ministry Archives, 24. XII., 5.X.38; pp. 46-7. Cited in Ibid, p. 363.

to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Accordingly, if Hitler were to have attacked the Soviet Union through Poland or Czechoslovakia, we could have counted on aid from Britain and France. On the other hand, if Hitler had attacked us through Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and that is the way through which Hitler intended to attack us, and did eventually attack us, we were not entitled to any help from Britain or France.[1041]

Vyshinsky's speech exemplified the suspicion that several historians have noted existed within Moscow towards Western sincerity in the negotiations. [1042] Indeed, he insinuated that London and Paris had deliberately refused to guarantee the Baltic states because of their indifference to a German attack on the Soviet Union. The 'English and French', Vyshinky said,

> ...were very careful to leave open the question, which was of interest to the Soviet Union, the question whether the U.S.S.R. in turn could count on help from Britain and France in case of attack, not on Poland nor Roumania with whom Britain had concluded a treaty of alliance, but on other states bordering the Soviet Union.[1043]

Litvinov had suggested a similar desire on the part of Britain and France to see Germany attack the Soviet Union in April, 1939,[1044] and Ivan Maisky reiterated such suspicions in his memoirs written after the war.[1045] Evidence shows that there was no conspiracy between the French and British to encourage Hitler to attack eastwards. But Moscow's suspicion of British sincerity is entirely understandable. Until the end of May, British ministers and officials had demanded the Soviet Union involve itself in a war between Germany and the

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[1041] Speech by M. A. Vyshinky in Committee I of the United Nations General Assembly. 25 October, 1947, pp. 114-115. FO 502/1 59106 *Documents in Confidential Print.* (Not published).
[1042] D. Cameron Watt emphasises the suspicion that existed within Moscow during the negotiations and is particularly critical of it. See Watt, *How War Came,* pp. 117-118; p. 123; p. 371; Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion,* p. 6; Alexander, *Gamelin,* pp. 301-302.
[1043] Speech by M. A. Vyshinky in Committee I of the United Nations General Assembly. 25 October, 1947, p. 116. FO 502/1 59106 *Documents in Confidential Print.* (Not published).
[1044] Telegram from the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R to the Soviet ambassador in Britain. 10 Apr. 1939.SPE, I, no.221; Telegram from the Soviet ambassador in Britain to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. 11 Apr. 1939. SPE, I, no. 226. Cited in Watt, *How War Came,* p. 363.
[1045] Maisky, *Who Helped Hitler,* pp. 77-91.

West, yet had rejected any suggestion that Britain involve itself in a war between Germany and the Soviet Union.[1046] Thereafter an alliance was agreed to, but with a clause that would ensure delay in the sending of aid and possible revision of the alliance in the event of war. The issue of reciprocity, as Vyshinksy outlined, was simply never appreciated or addressed by the British Cabinet.

The issue of reciprocity was not ignored because of a desire to see Germany attack the Soviet Union, at least by most members of the Cabinet. In fact, what has been proven in this chapter is that the British Cabinet rejected the Soviet proposal regarding the guarantee of the Baltics because it appeared to confirm suspicions that Moscow was intent on Communist expansion in eastern Europe. Cabinet members were right to suspect Soviet intentions. No precedent for such a demand existed. Moreover, the Soviet government did, in fact, plan to overrun those states on the Soviet border guaranteed by the alliance. Two points need to be made, however. Firstly, there was nothing the British government could do about defending these states, and they knew it. Whether the British, French and Soviet governments concluded an alliance or not, the independence of the Baltic states would disappear in the event of war. Either Germany would exploit their position to attack the Soviet Union, or, and what was more likely, Berlin would include control of the Baltic states in a deal to ensure Soviet neutrality. Realpolitik dominated the international situation by the summer of 1939, and this leads to the second, and most important, point with respect to Moscow's demand. Thus, although the Soviet government intended to exploit the guarantee against indirect aggression to establish control of the Baltic states, Stalin's motivation was never ideological.[1047] The demand was not a pretext for Communist expansion. Instead, Moscow's desire to bring the Baltic States into

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[1046] Hoare, *Troubled Years*, p. 356.

[1047] Gorodetsky outlines the arguments of those academics who underline the alleged ideological nature of Soviet foreign policy during this period. See, V. Suvorov, *Icebreaker*; R. C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power*. Cited in, Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, pp. 3 -4.

the Soviet sphere of influence was inextricably linked to the primary aim of securing Soviet territory. In order to adequately protect the Soviet Union from an almost certain German attack, the Soviet government needed control of the Baltic region as a strategically vulnerable area. Molotov used the demand for a guarantee of the Baltic States as a test of British sincerity, to test whether, in the event of war, London would allow Moscow to seize control of these States. It was a fair demand. Moscow wanted something in return for the sacrifices it would make in providing the second front against Germany. The Soviet government needed to know that the British and French would allow it to take what measures were necessary in war to ensure its survival. The British government, however, in its initial rejection of the demands, failed the test. Thus, rather than indicate insincerity on Moscow's part, the demand for a guarantee of the Baltics in fact revealed the opposite. The Soviet government was thinking in terms of war and making demands that it believed would aid the effectiveness of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance against German aggression.[1048]

Not all Cabinet members had allowed their mistrust of the Soviet Union's latest proposal to reverse their support for an alliance. Oliver Stanley, for example, continued to speak out in favour of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. Following this he condemned the panic and opposition which the definition of indirect aggression had provoked within the cabinet. Stanley was no less suspicious than his fellow ministers, he simply had no intention of fulfilling the clause of indirect aggression.[1049] This was an option neither Chamberlain nor other members had even considered. The minister reassured the Foreign Policy

[1048] Such conclusions are in part due to a conversation with Dr. Andrei Y. Sidorov. Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and Russian foreign policy, Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Date: 6. 02. 01; For further evidence to support this interpretation, see, *God Krizisa, 1938 - 1939: Dokumenty i Materialy,* 2 Vols., (Moscow, 1990); *Dokumenty Vneshnei Politiki 1939 god,* 2 Vols., (Moscow, 1992); G. Roberts provides further evidence to support this interpretation in his analysis of the Soviet take over of the Baltic States between 1939 - 1940. See, Geoffrey Roberts, 'Soviet Policy and the Baltic States, 1939 - 1940: A Reappraisal, *Diplomacy and Statecraft,* Vol. 6, (November, 1995).

[1049] CAB 25/625 56mtg. 4 July, 1939.

Committee that interpretation of the terms could be debated in the event of action being taken against indirect aggression. He 'doubted whether in fact the definition was as dangerous to us as had been suggested. It seemed to him to give endless opportunities for argument as to the real meaning of almost every word in it.'[1050] Stanley was the only member of both the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee who advocated the acceptance of Moscow's latest proposals. Outside the Cabinet, however, he was supported by the Chiefs of Staff. Though no longer invited to report their views to the Cabinet or Foreign Policy Committee after their presentations on 16 and 17 May, the Chiefs of Staff nevertheless continued to support an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. They reiterated what they believed to be the Soviet Union's strategical and military value, especially with regard to Japan.[1051] But more importantly, they continued to suspect and fear a German-Soviet rapprochement. Thus, while, they, too, disliked the Soviet definition of indirect aggression, nothing could persuade them that the risk of a German Soviet rapprochement was worth taking, not even the mistrust of Soviet intentions.[1052]

Unfortunately neither Stanley nor the Chiefs of Staff were influential upon the foreign policy decision making process at the end of July. Neville Chamberlain ultimately made the decisions and he now had the support of his Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee. Consequently, only a half-hearted attempt was made to secure an agreement with Moscow.[1053] Rather than send General Ironside who, Moscow was aware, had visited Poland earlier in the year, it was decided that the British military staff would be led by Admiral Sir Reginald Plunket-Ernle-Erle Drax. Drax had actually been a critic of appeasement policy for some

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[1050] Ibid.
[1051] CAB 53 / 50 C.O.S. 928 mtg. 15 June, 1939.
[1052] CAB 54/11 D.C.O.S. 179. 16 Aug, 1939. Cited in Lord Chatfield, *It Might Happen Again* ,p. 177. Note; Chatfield appears to acknowledge that an argument could be made in defence of Soviet demands.
[1053] Haslam, *Collective Security* , p. 226.

time. He perceived Hitler to be a 'self confessed assassin' and a 'confirmed liar', and had consequently repeated his call for rearmament in preparation for what was, he thought, likely to be war.[1054] His perceptions of the Soviet government were not much better. Like many within the British political elite, Drax suspected Soviet foreign policy aims remained the expansion of Communism.[1055] He perceived Moscow's leaders as nothing more than 'Bolshevik gangsters.'[1056] He, like Chamberlain, Halifax and Cadogan, also believed that the British government had made concession after concession during the negotiations and that the Soviets were to blame for the failure to conclude an agreement. Nevertheless, Drax wanted an alliance concluded because, he later wrote, 'Russia was credited with vast armies and the second biggest airforce in the world.'[1057]

The British staff together with the French staff, led by General Joseph Doumenc, were to travel on a slow passenger cruise liner, the *City of Exeter*. It would take nearly a week to reach the Soviet Union. Justifications have been made for the poor choice of staff personnel and transport for the staff mission to Moscow. Firstly, before going to Moscow, it had already been accepted that the British Expeditionary Force would have to go to France. As such, Generals could not risk being caught in the Soviet Union when war broke out. Secondly, regarding transport, there existed a real problem of conveying an Anglo-French staff mission in possession of war plans over the territory of potential enemies. Flying or travelling by train would have involved either landing on German territory or facing ambush along the way. To send a mission with a major fleet

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[1054] Articles, 'Europe Today', 12 Apr, 1938; 'England's Last Chance', 10 Oct, 1938; 'Future German Policy', 12 Dec, 1938. DRAX 2/12; Letter to the *Times,* 31 Mar, 1939. DRAX 2/3. Drax Papers.

[1055] Article. No title. 1937. DRAX 6/12. Ibid.

[1056] In his rough draft of 'Mission to Moscow' Drax referred to the 'Bolshevik gangsters in Moscow.' He then scribbled out 'gangsters' and replaced it with 'Communists.' Draft 'Mission to Moscow'. DRAX 6/5. Ibid.

[1057] Ibid.

of escorts would, arguably, have been too provocative.[1058] Such explanations, though logical, were not however the real reasons for the decisions taken during the final weeks of negotiations. For a more accurate explanation one has to examine the comments made by the decision makers.

Chamberlain and Halifax were now almost indifferent to the outcome of negotiations. They were prepared, if possible, to conclude some form of agreement with the Soviet government, but only if the political definition of indirect aggression was agreed upon. If this remained impossible, then Halifax believed dragging out the negotiations would suffice because it would at least prevent an alliance between Berlin and Moscow.[1059] Chamberlain, still in denial about the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement, only agreed to military talks, he told others, because 'if we rejected it, we should have endless trouble...'[1060] Thus, Drax was 'directed to go slowly and cautiously until such time as the political agreement was reached.'[1061] Drax acknowledged that 'there might be some difficulty in this, as it was probable that the Russians would be hoping for some tangible results from the military conversations before they were prepared to give their final agreement to the political act.'[1062] But the domination of distrust meant that London was not prepared to compromise on this point. 'It was pointed out' in the Cabinet, 'that we should put ourselves in a very weak position if we gave confidential information to the Soviet government before we had concluded any pact with them.'[1063] Chamberlain in particular, according to Admiral Drax, had never wanted the staff mission sent in the first

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[1058] Watt, *How War Came*, pp. 382-383.
[1059] Draft 'Mission to Moscow.' DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.
[1060] CAB 27 / 625 57 mtg. 10 July, 1939.
[1061] CAB 2 / 9 C. I. D. 372 mtg. 2 Aug, 1939; Draft, 'Mission to Moscow, August 1939.' DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.
[1062] Ibid.
[1063] CAB 23 / 99 Cab. 39. 26 July, 1939.

place.[1064] He was 'not hurrying on getting in Russia.'[1065] As a result, the powers given to Britain's military representatives were limited.[1066]

This was in stark contrast to the attitude of, and instructions given, by the French government.[1067] On 19 July, Bonnet had sent an appeal to Halifax urging acceptance of the Soviet definition of indirect aggression.[1068] Before the French General, Doumenc, left France to go to Moscow in August, Bonnet and Daladier urged him to return with an agreement.[1069] Doumenc, like the head of the British military mission, General Drax, did not have plenipotentiary powers.[1070] However, Daladier had given the French General the power to '"negotiate with the High Command of the Soviet armed forces on all questions regarding collaboration needed between the armed forces of the two countries." '[1071] As General Drax told Lord Chatfield, the ' "British had no written credentials." '[1072] Drax wrote later that it was 'an astonishing thing that the government and the Foreign Office should have let us sail without providing us with credentials or any similar document. One naturally felt, ..., a trifle non-plussed when asked to produce them.'[1073] More importantly, the absence of any credentials only served to heighten Soviet suspicions about the sincerity of the Western governments to conclude an alliance.[1074]

Difficulties arose when the British and French representatives were unable to

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[1064] Drax diary, 12 Aug, 1939. Cited in Colvin, *Vansittart*, p. 229.
[1065] Roderick Macleod and Denis Kelly, eds., *The Ironside Diaries,* (London, 1962), p. 77.
[1066] Letter from Drax to Lord Chatfield. 16 Aug, 1939. Appendix 1. Draft 'Mission to Moscow.' DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.
[1067] Draft 'Mission to Moscow.' DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.
[1068] Norton to Halifax. 15 July, 1939. no. 327. D.B.F.P., 3, VI.
[1069] Carley, *The Alliance*, pp. 185-186.
[1070] Ibid, pp. 195 - 197.
[1071] Letter from Drax to Chatfield. 16 Aug, 1939. Appendix I. Draft 'Mission to Moscow'. DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.
[1072] Ibid.
[1073] Draft 'Mission to Moscow'. DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.
[1074] Ibid.

provide the Soviet defence minister, Marshal Kliment E. Voroshilov, with adequate 'concrete plans' regarding the 'organisation of defence.' 'The main problem', however, 'was whether it was wise to put extreme pressure on Poland and Rumania to yield to the Soviet demands.' Negotiations all but broke down when British and French representatives were unable to answer the questions put forward by Voroshilov concerning the passage of Soviet troops through Poland and Rumania.[1075] The British government had never been willing to permit Soviet access through Polish territory against Warsaw's wishes. On 2 August, Halifax had told Drax that the Cabinet 'did not want to become involved in the negotiations between the Russians and Poles or Russians and Rumanians.'[1076] The Chiefs of Staff, still convinced that the Soviet government would secure an agreement with Berlin if an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance was not soon concluded on its terms, continued to overlook their suspicion of Soviet intentions and urged that pressure be applied to the Poles and Rumanians to allow Soviet access across their territory.[1077] In a memorandum dated 16 August the Chiefs of Staff stressed;

> In our opinion it is only logical that the Russians should be given every facility for rendering assistance and putting their maximum weight into the scale on the side of the anti-aggression powers. We consider it so important that if necessary the strongest pressure should be exerted on Poland and Rumania to persuade them to adopt a helpful attitude.[1078]

The Cabinet did not heed their advice. They should have. Indeed, they should have made far more of an effort throughout the negotiations to force Poland into allowing access for Soviet troops. It was impossible to claim that the decision not to pressurise the Poles had been taken because of concern for

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[1075] Ibid; Doumenc to Daladier. 14 Aug, 1939. *Documents Diplomatiques français, 1932 - 1939,* IIe Serie, Vol. XVIII, no. 23; Naggiar to Bonnet. 14 Aug, 1939. no. 24; Doumenc to Daladier. 15 Aug, 1939. no. 41; Naggiar to Bonnet. 15 Aug. 1939. no. 43; Doumenc to Daladier. 17 Aug. 1939. no. 94. Hereafter referred to as DDF, 2, XVIII....

[1076] CAB 2 / 9 C.I.D. 372. 2 Aug, 1939.

[1077] CAB 53/53 D.C.O.S. Telegram from Admiral Drax to Lord Chatfield, 14 Aug, 1939. Cited in, Draft 'Mission to Moscow'. DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.

[1078] CAB 54 / 11 D. C.O.S. 179. 16 Aug, 1939.

Poland's future. The Chiefs of Staff had made it clear that Poland could not defend itself if attacked by Germany. In the event that Britain and France would go to war against Germany they could do nothing to prevent the partitioning of Poland and other eastern European countries by Germany and the Soviet Union.[1079] Halifax had acknowledged Poland's likely demise in June.[1080] In addition it cannot be convincingly argued that the British government rejected Soviet proposals because of concern about the reaction of the British public.[1081] The opinion of the British public was mentioned only once in Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee meetings. Suspicion of Soviet intentions, on the other hand, had been stated on numerous occasions. Ultimately, the military technicalities of an alliance, including passage through Polish territory, was not dealt with before sending the British military staff to Moscow because the intentions of London were purely political, namely to ensure the prevention of a German-Soviet rapprochement, not necessarily to secure an alliance. When Britain did contact Warsaw with respect to Soviet military plans and access through Polish territory, it only did so because of its concern about relations between Moscow and Berlin. The efforts to persuade Warsaw to allow Soviet troops through its territory were not great.[1082]

The French government, in contrast, applied a good deal of pressure upon the Polish government to agree to the passage of Soviet troops through its territory.[1083] But following repeated refusals by Beck to allow access for Soviet troops[1084] , Doumenc was authorised by Paris to sign an agreement giving the Soviets permission to cross Polish territory. When Moscow insisted on a

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[1079] Thorne, *Approach of War,* p. 131. Alexander, *Gamelin,* p. 280, p. 289.
[1080] CAB 27 / 625 54 mtg. 26 June, 1939.
[1081] Ibid. 57 mtg. 10 July, 1939.
[1082] Cambon to Bonnet. 16 Aug, 1939. no. 62. DDF, 2, XVIII.
[1083] Bonnet to Naggiar. 16 Aug, 1939. no. 69; Bonnet to Noel. 19 Aug, 1939. no. 144. Ibid.
[1084] Noël to Bonnet. 18 Aug, 1939. no. 113; Le Général Musse to Daladier. 19 Aug, 1939. no. 147; Noël to Bonnet. 19 Aug, 1939. no. 153; Musse to Daladier. 20 Aug, 1939. no. 169; Noël to Bonnet. 20 Aug, 1939. no. 173. Ibid.

telegram from the Polish government outlining its permission for Soviet troops to cross its territory,[1085] Bonnet sent a cable to Bucharest falsely stating that the Poles had given permission for Soviet troops to cross Polish territory, in an attempt to persuade the Rumanians to do the same.[1086] These were the actions of a government that genuinely wanted to conclude an alliance with Moscow. Soviet representatives, including Voroshilov, appeared to believe the French were more sincere in their efforts than the British during the military talks.[1087] The French government cannot be absolved from responsibility for the loss of a crucial ally. Throughout 1939, Paris could have done more to ensure Moscow's cooperation and it was a mistake to allow the British to dictate negotiations during the final months. However, the French needed to maintain good relations with London. They needed a British ally above all else in the event of war, and this no doubt partly influenced their behaviour and decisions.[1088] Furthermore, they made much more of an effort to reach an agreement with the Soviets than the British, especially during the final days of the negotiations.[1089] London, on the other hand, refused to endorse Bonnet's decision to allow Doumenc to sign an agreement allowing Soviet troops access across Polish territory.[1090]

Whether, or to what extent, the Soviet government was still intent on entering an alliance with Britain and France during August is difficult to determine.[1091] William Strang accurately surmised that it would be a 'mistake if we suppose that Soviet policy is always exactly calculated, clearly defined and unhesitatingly

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[1085] Doumenc to Daladier. 21 Aug, 1939. no. 192; Naggiar to Bonnet. 21 Aug, 1939. no. 193; Naggiar to Bonnet. 21 Aug, 1939. no. 194; Doumenc to Daladier. 23 Aug, 1939. no. 268. Ibid; Strang, *Home and Abroad*, pp. 189-90.

[1086] Carley, *The Alliance*, p. 206.

[1087] Naggiar to Bonnet. 22 Aug, 1939. no. 240; Doumenc to Daladier. 23 Aug, 1939. no. 268. DDF, 2, XVIII.

[1088] Alexander, *Gamelin*, pp. 279-280, p. 297, p. 300; Young, *France*, p. 27.

[1089] Ibid. p. 209.

[1090] Cambon to Bonnet. 21 Aug, 1939. no. 190. DDF, 2, XVIII.

[1091] Parker, *Appeasement*, p. 242.

pursued."[1092] Until the end of July, the Soviet government's sincerity towards the West was evident in its continuation of negotiations and its rebuff of German feelers. During negotiations with the British and French military mission in August, however, the demands of Voroshilov appeared deliberately obstructive, and relations were maintained with Berlin.[1093] Could it be that this behaviour in fact reflected the insincerity of the Soviet government?[1094] In addition to their failure to agree upon the political demands of the Soviet government , neither Drax nor Doumenc had arrived in Moscow able to promise the Soviets significant military assistance in the event of war. Indeed, all present at the talks, including Voroshilov, were aware of what little effort would be made by the West to advance into German territory, especially during the early stages of the war. The British and French forces were not strong enough to provide any notable help in relieving German pressure on the eastern front.[1095] One could suggest, therefore, that with such little to offer the Soviets, Stalin had already instructed Voroshilov to prolong the negotiations whilst a deal with Berlin was struck. Indeed, one might argue that the obvious military weakness of the British and French had persuaded Stalin against allying with the West months earlier. This is one of the more convincing arguments in favour of the portrayal of Moscow as insincere.

However, it seems highly unlikely that Litvinov and then Molotov would have continued to try and secure an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance throughout 1938 and 1939 if Stalin did not think that British and French allies would be significantly beneficial to the Soviet Union. If Moscow had no intention of securing an alliance because of British and French military weakness, surely

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[1092] Strang, *Home and Abroad*, p. 197.
[1093] Roberts, *Soviet Union*, p. 86.
[1094] Evidence is not yet available to shed light on what Stalin personally thought, or on the details of the Soviet foreign policy decision making process. Consequently, one can only interpret the behaviour, decisions and statements made.
[1095] Alexander, *Gamelin*, p. 280, p. 289.

Soviet representatives would have made more of an effort to improve relations with the Germans. They would not have rejected Berlin's overtures for as long as they did. The reason Moscow put feelers out to the West in 1938 and continued negotiations with Britain and France during 1939, was because it knew Germany intended to attack the Soviet Union. Therefore *any* assistance from the West, as long as Britain and France were committed to the resistance of German aggression, was preferable. Assistance would be meagre at first, but there could be a second front. The Soviet Union would not be left alone to face Hitler. This is why the Soviets continued, sincerely, to seek an alliance with Britain and France. On 3 August, Count Schulenberg, the German ambassador in Moscow, said that 'the Soviet Government is at present determined to sign with England and France if they fulfil all Soviet wishes. It will...take considerable effort on our part to cause the Soviet Government to swing about."[1096] As late as 13 August, Admiral Drax still believed the Soviet government was intent on signing an agreement with the British and French, so long as all Soviet demands were agreed to.[1097] It was commitment the Soviet government sought; an assurance that London and Paris would at least do everything they could to work together with the Soviet Union in the resistance of German aggression. It was this lack of commitment, shown through the repeated rejections of an alliance, then a refusal to accept Molotov's political demands, that persuaded Stalin to consider an alliance with Berlin.[1098] Moscow had not rejected an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance entirely by August. Rather than entering negotiations on 12 August intent on an alliance[1099], it seems more accurate to surmise, considering Voroshilov's behaviour, that the Soviet government had not yet dismissed the possibility of an Anglo-French-Soviet

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[1096] R. J. Sontag and J. S. Beddie eds., *Nazi - Soviet Relations, 1939 - 1941,* (New York, 1948), p. 41.
[1097] Draft 'Mission to Moscow.' DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.
[1098] Naggiar to Bonnet. 21 Aug, 1939. no. 183. DDF, 2, XVIII.
[1099] Roberts, *Soviet Union,* p.85

alliance entirely. The negotiations were a test, not of British and French military strength, but whether Paris and London were yet willing to cooperate with Moscow fully. They failed. Thus, the obvious lack of commitment, especially by the British, finally swayed Stalin towards Berlin. On 22 August, the British and French staff missions made a last appeal to Molotov, but it was too late. On 19 August, the Soviet - German economic pact had been announced. On 21 August, Molotov agreed to the visit of Ribbentrop, Germany's Minister for Foreign Affairs.[1100] The failure of the negotiations was confirmed on 23 August when British politicians were told of the Nazi-Soviet non aggression pact.

When the British politicians were told of the Nazi - Soviet pact on 23 August, there were no signs of great panic.[1101] Yet, all must have realised what the pact meant for the future. Hitler now knew he faced a war only on one front. Poland was at the mercy of its two greatest enemies, and there was very little either Britain or France could do. It is not surprising, therefore, that Inskip soon observed that Chamberlain 'seemed under the weather."[1102] Throughout the negotiations during 1939 the Soviet government had remained sincerely dedicated to an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. The majority of ministers and influential officials struggled to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices to the extent that they agreed to a mutual alliance at the end of May. But Chamberlain sabotaged the opportunity for a successful conclusion to the negotiations, and thereafter, members of the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee allowed their ideological distrust of the Soviet Union to once more dictate foreign policy decisions. The Soviet definition of indirect aggression did appear to confirm suspicions of Soviet intentions, but it was a justifiable demand. In addition,

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[1100] An official of the Economic Policy department to the embassy in the Soviet Union. Signed Schnurre. 19 Aug, 1939. no. 135; The ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Foreign Ministry. Signed Schulenberg. 21 Aug. 1939. Ibid. no.158. D. G. F. P., D, VII; Draft 'Mission to Moscow.' DRAX 6/5. Drax Papers.

[1101] Diary entry. 23 Aug, 1939. INSKP 1/2. Inskip Diaries.

[1102] Ibid.

London still had to consider the possibility of a German-Soviet rapprochement. Suspicions surrounding German - Soviet relations had increased significantly throughout 1939, and the remaining possibility of such an alliance was enough to persuade the Chiefs of Staff, Oliver Stanley, and indeed the French government to continue overlooking their anti-Soviet prejudices. Their willingness to accept Soviet proposals proved that it was not impossible for individuals to overlook their suspicion. Instead it remained a matter of choice, namely, whether one feared a German - Soviet rapprochement, or Communist expansion, more. With an underlying assumption that Britain could prevent such a rapprochement by simply dragging out the negotiations, minister's allowed their historic ideological suspicion to dominate. Ultimately, then, through their unwillingness to overcome their anti soviet attitudes, the British Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee, but especially Neville Chamberlain, had caused Anglo-Soviet-French negotiations to break down and pushed Moscow into Berlin's arms.

Chapter Seven:

Attitudes of the British Foreign Office, Moscow Embassy and British Diplomats towards the Soviet Union, March 1939 - August, 1939.

During 1939, the new British ambassador in Moscow, William Seeds, supported an Anglo - French - Soviet agreement, and later an alliance. His fear of the Soviet government reverting to a policy of isolationism was enough to persuade him to overlook the hostility and distrust he held towards the Soviet government. Interestingly, despite the increasing suspicion of a German - Soviet rapprochement amongst ministers and officials involved in the foreign policy decision making process, the majority of the officials in the Northern Department did not believe the rumours received of such a danger. Certain officials became anxious about the possibility of such a threat at different times during the year, but ultimately, they were not convinced of its likelihood. Consequently, with nothing greater to fear than the expansion of Communism, which most still suspected to be Moscow's primary aim, they, like Chamberlain, did not support an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance until it was too late.

At the beginning of 1939, the Moscow embassy told London that it could see no end in the near future to the terror gripping the Soviet state.[1103] The devastating consequences of the purges upon the armed forces were also still apparent. The army was, in the opinion of Firebrace, 'still handicapped by the effects of past events'[1104] , and the ability of Soviet industry to provide supplies in the event of war remained doubtful.[1105] Pravda's claims that the Soviet navy would soon 'be the most powerful navy in the world'[1106], could not be substantiated, and

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[1103] Vereker to Halifax. 9 Jan,1939. VNST 1, 3/2. Vansittart Papers.
[1104] Firebrace to Seeds. 6 Mar, 1939. doc. 35. D.F.A., 2, A.
[1105] Memorandum B. Firebrace to Seeds doc. 32. Inclosure in Seeds to Halifax. 6 Mar, 1939. doc. 30. Ibid.
[1106] Seeds to Halifax. 30 May, 1939. doc. 65. Ibid.

Hallawell reported that the 'Soviet airforce is capable of developing little offensive power..., unless operating in concert with Poland.' 'This power', he added, 'would even then be limited."[1107] Despite such shortcomings, however, Firebrace concluded that the Soviet Union could still prove to be a valuable ally; '...it would still prove a serious obstacle to an attacker."[1108] The higher ranks of the army especially appeared to be entering a new period of stability. Firebrace reported in March:

> The publication in the press of the decrees ordering the promotion of sixty one senior officers and Commissars gives hope that a condition of stability in the higher ranks has at last been reached, as no similar list has been made public since the beginning of the army purge in 1937...the Red army... is now once more on the upward grade.[1109]

Its strategical position still hindered its effectiveness in an offensive war. However, Firebrace did not think it was incapable of taking offensive action.[1110]

Reports upon Soviet naval potential were also comparatively positive during 1939. In a dispatch sent at the end of May, Britain's naval attaché referred to a 'number of recent developments' which revealed that the Soviet Union was 'embarking on a course of rapid naval expansion with the primary purpose of meeting a threat from Germany through the Baltic States and to a lesser degree with the purpose of strengthening its naval position in the Far East.'[1111] Indeed, in the opinion of both Firebrace and Clanchy, the Soviet government had 'undoubtedly' begun to prepare its forces for war.[1112] In addition to the more positive reports about the Red army and navy, London was also reassured of the Soviet Union's continued political stability. In fact, in contrast to his reports of

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[1107] Memorandum C. 'The Soviet Airforce' by Wing Commander Hallawell. doc.33. Inclosure in Seeds to Halifax. 6 Mar, 1939. doc. 30. Ibid.
[1108] Memorandum B. Firebrace to Seeds. doc. 32. Inclosure in Seeds to Halifax. 6 Mar, 1939. doc. 30. Ibid.
[1109] Colonel Firebrace to Seeds. 6 Mar, 1939. doc. 35. Ibid.
[1110] Ibid.
[1111] Seeds to Halifax. 30 May 1939. doc. 65. Ibid.
[1112] Memorandum B. Firebrace to Seeds doc. 32. Inclosure in Seeds to Halifax. 6 Mar, 1939. doc. 30; Seeds to Halifax 30 May, 1939. doc. 65. Ibid.

1938, Maclean no longer believed that war would overturn this stability. 'It is clear that much would depend on circumstances, and, in particular, on the duration of the conflict and the course followed by it', he wrote. But, he concluded that 'while participation in a war might well have an unsettling effect on this country internally, it is not possible to conclude that an internal political upheaval would necessarily ensue."[1113]

Thus, during his first months as ambassador in Moscow, William Seeds, who had replaced Viscount Chilston in January 1939, was able to inform London of at least some apparent progress in the military strength and therefore capabilities of the Soviet Union. The terror continued and evidence of its destruction on all areas of Soviet life remained. The Soviet Union was a very different place to the 'real old Russia"[1114] Seeds had lived in before the Bolshevik revolution, and though Seeds had harboured a romanticism about the country before the turmoil of revolution, in 1939 he was very much aware of the realities of Soviet life under Stalin's dictatorship. He, too, for example, appreciated Stalin's wish for absolute control.[1115] It was, perhaps, because of his experience of pre-Soviet life before Stalin's regime that Seeds found the Soviet dictator's brutality towards Soviet citizens most distressing. He wrote of the 'untold suffering of widespread famine...', '... of a standard of living for the "tolling masses" lower than that of any non-Asiatic country', and of the 'millions of lives' sacrificed for the sake of industrial transformation.[1116] The ambassador was appalled by the realities of Soviet life which underpinned the progress being made. Nevertheless, Seeds could not deny such progress. In 1939, the British ambassador recognised the Soviet Union as a major power.

[1113] Memoranda A. 'The Political Stability of the Soviet Union' by Maclean. doc 31. Inclosure in Seed to Halifax. 6 Mar, 1939. doc.30. Ibid.
[1114] Aster, *World War,* pp. 152-3.
[1115] Seeds to Halifax. 12 May, 1939. no. 509. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[1116] Seeds to Halifax. 21 Feb, 1939. doc. 25. D.F.A., 2, A.

> In 1932, the plan, in its broad outlines had been achieved, and the Soviet Union had been transformed from a chiefly agricultural to a highly industrialised country... During the period of the Second Five Year Plan further advances were achieved in the industrialisation of the country, and at the stage when the third Five Year Plan is announced the Soviet Union can claim to be a country which to all intents and purposes is in the position to produce the raw materials it requires to arm itself and to provide its population with a bare minimum of the necessities of life.[1117]

Seeds noted the existing weaknesses in, for example, Soviet industry. 'It cannot be said', he wrote, '...that the mastery of the new industrial enterprises and new technique, which was to have been the main task of the Second Five Year Plan, was achieved.' He went on to report that complaints by Soviet citizens overwhelmed the Soviet press, particularly about the conditions and equipment on the collective farms.[1118] But, the ambassador admitted, the Soviet Union was no longer the economically backward country many in Britain still perceived it to be. Indeed, Moscow had achieved much of what it had set out to achieve. Seeds admitted that 'the Soviet government have achieved their main object of incorporating practically the whole of the population of this country in socialised activities and creating the framework for a large-scale operation of industry and agriculture.'[1119] Whether 'the Soviet economic apparatus could be greatly expanded to meet the demands which would be made upon it should the country be involved in war within the next few months...' was difficult to conclude[1120] However, it was acknowledged that the Soviet Union possessed 'essential raw materials.'[1121] Moreover, Seeds agreed with his officials about Soviet political stability. He still thought war and Stalin's death could possibly

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[1117] Ibid.
[1118] Ibid.
[1119] Ibid.
[1120] Memorandum D. 'The Economic Situation in the Soviet Union' by Mr Todd. doc 34. Inclosure in Seeds to Halifax 6 Mar, 1939. doc. 30. Ibid.
[1121] Note by Ashton Gwatkin. doc. 48. Annex to 'Visit to Northern Capitals' by R. S. Hudson. 18 Mar - 14 Apr, 1939. doc. 47. Ibid.

shake this stability, but he informed London; 'Despite its many glaring defects, the system is not likely to break down..."[1122]

Political stability and economic transformation were not enough to persuade Seeds to speak out in favour of Anglo-Soviet collaboration during his first months in Moscow. Why? He was not, he explained, as 'incurably suspicious"[1123] as some. Maclean, for example, believed that Moscow's 'ultimate aim in no way corresponds to those pursued...by the Western democracies."[1124] Seeds on the other hand did not agree that Moscow was simply waiting for all capitalist countries to destroy each other so that it could emerge triumphant and expand across Europe.[1125] Yet, the ambassador did not completely trust Moscow either. He was still wary, and revealed his underlying distrust on several occasions. In March, for example, the ambassador warned Halifax against believing Moscow's rhetoric and promises:

> ...while M. Stalin and various other speakers...emphasise Soviet readiness to defend the frontiers of the Soviet Union, should they be attacked, the line taken by all of them is that the chief care of those responsible for Soviet foreign policy must be to prevent the Soviet Union from being dragged into the struggle now in progress between the Fascist states and the so-called democracies...Those innocents at home who believe that Soviet Russia is only awaiting an invitation to join the Western democracies should be advised to ponder M. Stalin's advice to his party; "To be cautious and not allow Soviet Russia to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire"[1126]

Initially, then, the ambassador did not appear to favour close cooperation with the Soviet government. However, by the end of March, Seeds had changed his mind.

[1122] Seeds to Halifax. 21 Feb, 1939. doc. 25. Ibid.
[1123] Seeds to Halifax. 13 Apr, 1939. no. 52. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[1124] Memoranda A. 'The Political Stability of the Soviet Union' by Maclean. doc. 31. Inclosure in Seeds to Halifax. 6 Mar,1939. doc. 30. D.F.A., 2, A.
[1125] Seeds to Halifax. 13 Apr, 1939. no. 52. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[1126] Seeds to Halifax. 24 Mar, 1939. doc. 40 . D.F.A., 2, A.

The ambassador first indicated that he had changed his views regarding Anglo-Soviet collaboration in a memorandum he wrote upon the Polish and Rumanian opposition to Soviet involvement in a policy of collective security. Seeds wrote that he agreed

> ...with the Russian ambassador in the hope that some means may be found by His Majesty's Government to prevail on Poland and Rumania to accept the idea of some form of Soviet military assistance. Such acceptance to be notified <u>now</u> and not put off until an outbreak of war...[1127]

Seeds urged for pressure to be applied upon the Poles and Rumanians to ensure Soviet involvement. He did not think that objections from the Poles and Rumanians should dictate the terms of an alliance between Britain and the Soviet Union. Hence, he did not agree with those who portrayed their opposition to Soviet inclusion as an impossible obstacle. Indeed, the ambassador even went so far as to suggest the French threaten its allies with desertion; 'Could not the French Government...make it clear to Polish and Rumanian Governments that if those two countries want French assistance they must be prepared also to accept some form of help from France's ally?"[1128] In April, he criticised the decision to repeat the earlier proposal of a unilateral declaration. For the Soviet government, he explained, such a proposal only confirmed that London had no real intention of cooperating with the Soviet Union against aggression.[1129]

Seeds still aired his personal grievances against the Soviet Union. His suspicion of Moscow's intentions, for example, had not disappeared. He admitted to 'not being at all sure what these people are actually up to.' He did not discount that the Soviet government might 'go on "raising" us higher than we can possibly go

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[1127] Seeds to Halifax. 13 Apr, 1939. no. 52. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[1128] Seeds to Halifax. 14 Apr,1939. no. 161. Ibid.
[1129] Seeds to Halifax .25 Apr,1939. no. 282. Ibid.

with a view to an eventual outburst of true Communist indignation at our ineffectiveness and hypocrisy, ending in Soviet isolation and safety behind our guarantees to Poland."[1130] Seeds also voiced his ideological hostility, complaining that the 'Comintern has..., been calling upon the working classes in the democratic countries to stand together and to bring about the overthrow of the reactionary bourgeois Governments..."[1131] Furthermore, he remained the voice of caution upon the more positive reports by embassy officials regarding developments within the Soviet Union.[1132] However, Seeds continued to support an Anglo-Soviet agreement[1133] , and by May, the ambassador stated clearly that the British government ought to propose a simple mutual alliance with the Soviet Union and France. The government, he advised, 'should propose some formula which would provide...for two simultaneous agreements, one being a pact of mutual assistance and the second a 'concrete agreement as to the form and extent of assistance.'[1134]

Molotov's insistence on the imposition of guarantees on the Baltic States, communicated to Seeds at the end of May, disturbed the ambassador. He, like many others within the British political elite, was at first opposed to the idea of allowing the Soviets to invade a country in time of war under the pretext of aid;

> I said bluntly that neither His Majesty's Government nor British public opinion were prepared to consider forcing guarantees of protection on independent nations which did not desire them; such unwanted guarantees were menaces, not assurances of protection; we had adhered to that principle from the outset, and any change in that attitude would be repugnant to the fundamental spirit of the British people.[1135]

Though Seeds did not question 'the military importance to Soviet Russia of

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[1130] Seeds to Oliphant. 16 May,1939. no. 533. Ibid.
[1131] Seeds to Halifax. 13 June,1939. doc. 81. D.F.A., 2, A.
[1132] Seeds to Halifax. 30 May, 1939. doc. 65 . Ibid.
[1133] Seeds to Halifax. 6 Apr, 1939. no. 13. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[1134] Seeds to Halifax. 27 May, 1939. no. 648. Ibid.
[1135] Seeds to Halifax. 30 May, 1939. no. 670. D.B.F.P., 3, V.

these [Baltic] states which in war-time might be the object of a race with Germany', he did suspect a 'less praiseworthy motive on their part.'[1136] Yet, this recent proposal did not appear to have persuaded the ambassador against securing an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. Indeed, Seeds took pains to avoid a breakdown of negotiations during June and July, noting the importance of not provoking what he perceived to be Molotov's deep suspicion of the West.[1137] Even Molotov's demand upon the inclusion of a Soviet definition of indirect aggression at the beginning of July did not cause Seeds to think twice about the desirability of an alliance with Moscow (as it did cause many to do in London). By the beginning of July, Seeds, like Halifax and others, expressed frustration at the failure to conclude negotiations despite what he believed to be Britain's repeated concessions.[1138] Ultimately, he agreed with London's refusal to accept a proposal that sanctioned interference in the internal affairs of another state.[1139] But, it is interesting that, unlike Chamberlain especially, he never once considered stopping talks and did not seem to adhere to the cabinet's preference to simply ensure the negotiations dragged on. Indeed, until the signing of the Nazi Soviet pact, documents reveal that Seeds at least genuinely worked to secure some form of Anglo-French-Soviet alliance.[1140]

Evidently, Seeds had decided throughout the negotiations to put aside his hostility towards the Soviet government, and, to some extent, his suspicion. Why? Seeds primary concern was that the Soviet Union would revert to a policy of isolationism. Like many of the anti-appeasers, Seeds appreciated the Kremlin's suspicions of the West and its increasing resentment at what it

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[1136] Seeds to Halifax. 24 June, 1939. no. 139. D.B.F.P., 3, VI.
[1137] Seeds to Halifax. 17 June, 1939. no. 73; 20 June, 1939. no. 99; Ibid. no. 103; 27 July, 1939. no. 465. Ibid.
[1138] Seeds to Halifax. 4 July, 1939. no. 225. Ibid.
[1139] Seeds to Halifax. 18 July, 1939. no. 338; 28 July, 1939. no. 473. Ibid.
[1140] Seeds to Halifax. 13 Aug, 1939. no. 647. Ibid.

perceived to be its unfair treatment during the negotiations.[1141] He repeatedly informed London of the suspicion evoked by its proposals[1142] and alerted the Foreign Secretary to the danger of Moscow pulling out of negotiations.[1143] In May, for example, he warned against assuming Moscow's continued participation in the talks emphasising '... the cryptic remark made to me by M. Molotov on the 8th May,...to the effect that Soviet policy was liable to alteration..."[1144] During the same month, Seeds did reassure the Foreign Secretary that 'there is no real evidence yet that the Soviet Government intend to retreat from the proposals made to His Majesty's Government and the French Government..."[1145] He wanted to persuade London of Moscow's sincerity in order to ensure a continuation of negotiations. At the same time, however, Seeds wanted to warn Halifax that the British government could not dictate terms and refuse to compromise without the risk of Moscow removing itself from negotiations altogether.

A consequence of Soviet isolationism was the threat of a German - Soviet rapprochement. In January, Seeds had informed Whitehall about a possible German - Soviet trade agreement. The Soviets were to receive a credit of between two to three million marks, and in return, the Germans would procure principal war materials.[1146] In the same month, Vereker informed London of the comments of a German embassy official regarding the possible exchange of raw materials and arms between Germany and the Soviet Union.[1147] In February, Vereker suggested Stalin was moving closer towards the German dictator. He wrote to Collier at the Northern Department outlining an address recently given

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[1141] CAB 27/625. 48 mtg. 19 May, 1939.
[1142] Seeds to Halifax. 25 Apr, 11 May, 1939. nos. 282, 481. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[1143] Seeds to Halifax. 13 Apr,1939. no. 52. Ibid.
[1144] Seeds to Halifax. 12 May,1939. no. 509. Ibid.
[1145] Seeds to Halifax. 9 May, 12 May, 1939. nos. 422, 509. Ibid.
[1146] Seeds. 27 Jan,1939. Ibid.
[1147] Telegram from Vereker. FO 371 / 23686. Cited in Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', p. 517.

by the 'official People's Commisariat for Foreign Affairs';

> He explained from Soviet point of view there was nothing to choose between the two blocs of powers, the fascist bloc on the one hand and the "so called democracies" on the other. Soviet Government, in course of their manoeuvres between them would not hesitate to incline towards the fascist bloc.[1148]

By April, Seeds felt obliged to inform London that a German - Soviet rapprochement was a real danger. 'I am bound', he wrote

> ...to point to a possible danger arising either now or in case of war at the stage where Germany had reached the Soviet frontier through Poland, namely an offer by Germany to the Soviet Union of Bessarabia and parts of Poland not to mention perhaps Estonia and Latvia.[1149]

The Moscow embassy, then, were more than aware of the possible danger of improving German - Soviet relations, and they informed London of this.

Whitehall was not only receiving information from Moscow, however. Indeed, rumours received by the Foreign Office in London increased significantly during 1939[1150], especially from May onwards.[1151] Early in May, for example, the Northern Department learnt that the German Generals had received a 'new and unexpected offer' from the Soviet Union which might entirely change the situation.[1152] At the same time, rumours from British representatives in the Vatican, and from Coulondre (via Henderson), stating the imminence of an agreement between Stalin and Hitler were also received.[1153] Later in the month the Foreign Office was informed for the first time of articles being written by a

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[1148] Vereker to Collier. 21 Feb,1939. FO 371/23677.
[1149] Seeds to Halifax. 13 Apr,1939. no. 52. D.B.F.P., 3, V.
[1150] Minute by Collier. 24 Jan,1939. FO 371/23687.
[1151] Donald Cameron Watt has identified seventeen known warnings, but has pointed out that evidence suggests there may have been more. See, Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', p. 513.
[1152] Minute by Strang. 6 May. 1939. FO 371/22972; Henderson to Halifax .5 May, 8 May, 1939. nos. 377, 413. D.B.F.P., 3, V. Cited in Aster, *World War,* p. 171.
[1153] Telegram from Osborne. 6 May, 1939; Henderson to FO. 8 May, 1939. FO 371 / 22972. Cited in Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', p. 519.

Soviet defector in the U.S called Samuel Ginsberg (alias Walter Krivitsky).[1154] A memorandum from the Washington Chancery read:

> Reports that a certain General W. G. Krivitsky,described as a former general in the Red Army, erstwhile chief of military intelligence for Western Europe has lately arrived in the United States of America. He has been contributing series of articles to Saturday Evening Post and giving interviews to press purporting to give inside story of events in the Soviet Union. His reoccurring theme is that M. Stalin has long been working towards an understanding with Berlin.[1155]

During the month of June, further rumours were received citing German efforts in particular to secure an agreement with the Soviets.[1156] The text of an article written by Senor Gimenez Arnau, Rome correspondent of the semi-official Spanish News Agency "Efe" , for example, suggested 'possible diplomatic negotiations between Russia and Germany.'[1157] Rumours lessened during the month of July, but the Washington Chancery did transmit four more articles written by Krivitsky and published in the Saturday Evening Post.[1158] Following this, the Foreign Office apparently heard nothing until the Central Department received news on 22 August of the Schulenberg - Molotov meeting that had occurred on 15 August.[1159]

During the spring and summer of 1939, then, the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement could not be ignored. Despite claims of ignorance by Sargent and others after the announcement of the German - Soviet non aggression pact[1160] , minutes between January and July show that officials

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[1154] See Christopher Andrews for more information about Krivitsky and rumours of the German-Soviet rapprochement in general. Andrews, *Secret Service,* pp. 423-427.
[1155] Washington Chancery to Northern Department. 16 May, 1939. FO 371/23697.
[1156] Makins minute. 12 June, 1939. no. 36; Mack to FO. 9 June, 1939. no. 11; Ridsdale memorandum. 16 June, 1939. Appendix 1, no. iii. D.B.F.P., 3, VI. Cited in Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', pp. 520 - 521.
[1157] Sir M. Peterson (San Sebastian)23 June, 1939. FO 371/23686.
[1158] Washington Chancery to Northern Department.14 July, 1939. Ibid.
[1159] Steinhardt to State Department. 16 Aug, 1939. F. R. U. S. , Vol. 1, pp. 334-335; Lindsay to Foreign Office. no. 41. D.B.F.P., 3, VII. Cited in Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', p. 524.
[1160] Minute by Sargent. 3 Sept, 1939. FO 371 / 23686. Cited in Aster, *World War,* pp. 317-318.

received, considered and judged information from various sources about a possible German - Soviet agreement. As a result of this information several officials did in fact become unnerved during the year. However, despite these reports, few of the officials in Whitehall were ever convinced of the danger of a rapprochement. There was simply not enough evidence during the year to convince officials who were already deeply skeptical of the likelihood of a rapprochement.[1161] As early as 1935, for example, Orme Sargent had convinced himself that such an occurrence would remain impossible because of the conflicting ideologies of the two countries.[1162] In 1939, several officials within the Northern Department agreed. Either the sources of these rumours, such as Krivitsky, were thought to be unreliable,[1163] or, officials suspected that such rumours were deliberately circulated by Berlin or Moscow in order to pressurise Britain into coming to an agreement with them.

Frank Roberts, an official in the Central Department, for example, dismissed rumours of a rapprochement as merely efforts on the part of both Berlin and Moscow to scare the British government. 'It is of course', he minuted, 'plainly in the German interest to put such confident stories about, just as it is in the Russian interest to frighten us with the bogy of an agreement with Germany.'[1164] A. S. Halford agreed.[1165] Similarly, D. W. Lascelles, minuted in January that he thought the possibility of Stalin 'toying' with the idea of 'buying off without a fight' was 'very improbable.'[1166] He did not fret about reports of the possible new trade agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union either.[1167] In February,

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[1161] Memorandum by Sargent on Russia's probable attitude towards a "General settlement" with Germany; and the proposed Air Agreement. 7 Feb, 1935. no. 428.D.B.F.P., 2, XII. Cited in, Manne, ' Anglo - Soviet rapprochement', p. 738.
[1162] Ibid.
[1163]Andrews, *Secret Service,* p. 423
[1164] Minute by Roberts. 10 June, 1939. FO 371/23067.
[1165] Minute by Halford. 24 Jan,1939. FO 371 / 23686.
[1166] Minute by Lascelles. 3 Jan, 1939. FO 371/23677.
[1167] Minute by Lascelles. 27 Jan, 1939. FO 371/23687.

Lascelles admitted that ' the Soviet "party line" is tending away from the democracies and towards the dictatorships.' He continued; 'The absence of the usual anti-Soviet tirade from Herr Hitler's last speech seems to indicate that the Germans...are aware of this new tendency and are playing up to it.' Yet, he dismissed such behaviour as a 'Soviet attempt to frighten us [the British government]."[1168] By May, Lascelles felt reassured that a German-Soviet rapprochement would not occur.[1169] No evidence existed to convince the First Secretary that rumours of Berlin and Moscow moving towards one another were 'well-founded.'[1170]

Lascelles became unnerved once more between June and July. He accepted, for example, that the Germans were 'making a special effort to come to an understanding with Moscow', and although he pointed out that there was no evidence to suggest Moscow would respond to German feelers, Lascelles could not deny his fear that Molotov's recent hostility towards London might be 'symptomatic.'[1171] By the end of July, however, Lascelles again dismissed what he believed to be only unsubstantiated rumours. He criticised Krivitsky in particular, noting that the Soviet defector's articles 'contain nothing at all convincing in support of their author's main thesis, viz. that Stalin has for years past been a persistent - though constantly rebuffed - suitor of Germany.' Lascelles continued:

> The thesis may well be true to this extent, that Stalin, who is a dictator first and a communist second, has little personal animosity against the very similar Nazi dictatorship, is a remarkably cautious schemer who never burns his boats if he can avoid it, and would probably welcome an understanding with Hitler if he thought it would really work - if he thought it would safeguard the Soviet Union from attack for a reasonably

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[1168] Minute by Lascelles. 21 Feb, 1939. FO 371/23677.
[1169] Minute by Lascelles. 10 May, 1939. Ibid.
[1170] Minute by Lascelles. 11 May,1939. FO 371/23686.
[1171] Sir M. Peterson (San Sebastian). 23 June, 1939. Ibid.

> long period. But there's nothing here to show that he really does think that: he is repeatedly described, indeed, as hankering after an agreement and as confident of achieving one, but the "evidence" is all indirect and second hand. On this subject, M. Krivitski appears to have a genuine bee in his bonnet.[1172]

Lascelles ultimately dismissed the possibility of a rapprochement between Berlin and Moscow. But he had revealed some hesitation in doing so. Gladwyn Jebb[1173] , though also not convinced of a rapprochement, was even more unsure about dismissing the possibility altogether. At the beginning of January, for example, Jebb, referring to rumours of trade conversations between Moscow and Berlin, warned that 'the Soviet government would hardly be likely to enter into these without some political assurance, which the Germans are presumably prepared to give."[1174] By the end of the month, Jebb's suspicion of political relations between Germany and the Soviet Union had lessened, if only because the trade negotiations themselves had broken down.[1175] However, by March, Jebb could not dismiss the possibility of a political agreement between the two dictatorships if they saw 'the chance of concluding a deal profitable to both."[1176] Assessing the situation objectively, Jebb realised that it was unlikely either Berlin or Moscow would refuse a deal advantageous to their future plans. Unfortunately, because there existed no reliable evidence to support the official's suspicion, he continued to have doubts about the likelihood of a rapprochement. By July, for example, Jebb once more denied the likelihood of a German - Soviet rapprochement, this time because of the unreliability of Krivitsky's articles. Referring to four articles by Krivitsky transmitted by the Washington Chancery at the end of July, Jebb minuted:

[1172] Minute by Lascelles. 14 July, 1939. Ibid.
[1173] Jebb was also responsible for liaison with intelligence services. See Aster *World War,* p. 23.
[1174] Minute by Jebb. 23 Jan, 1939. FO 371 / 23686.
[1175] Minute by Jebb. 26 Jan, 1939. Ibid.
[1176] Minute by Jebb. 19 Mar, 1939. FO 371/23687.

These articles obviously contain a few grains of truth, with the result that they are very plausible. The writer - as far as I can ascertain - has made no mistake of detail, but seems to have drawn all the wrong conclusions. For instance, after citing M. Stalin's anti-German moves, he maintains that these moves only prove with what ardour the Kremlin is wooing the Wilhelmstrasse. Of course one can conduct an expedition to the South Pole via the North Pole, but it is not the usual way to go about things (even in Russia!)[1177]

Laurence Collier held similar opinions about the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement. Like Jebb, he did not think that sufficient evidence existed to prove its likelihood[1178], but on the other hand, could not dismiss the possibility completely. At the beginning of January Collier had dismissed rumours of German - Soviet military contacts.[1179] But by February, Collier minuted in response to the trade negotiations between Berlin and Moscow that 'any agreement involving the delivery of German war material to the Soviet government must imply a political detente, if not a rapprochement.'[1180] Collier experienced only momentary anxiety however. In response to Hitler's calling off the negotiations, he noted that 'presumably the political implications of the move caused Hitler to change his mind at the last moment (He is not so likely to have changed it for purely commercial reasons).'[1181] By May, Collier reiterated his disbelief in the likelihood of a German-Soviet rapprochement. In a letter to the Washington Chancery regarding articles written by Krivitsky he wrote,

> On the whole we do not consider that these would-be hair-raising revelations of Stalin's alleged desire for a rapprochement with Germany etc, are worth taking seriously; and we shall not ask for more of them unless you particularly wish us to do so...[1182]

[1177] Minute by Jebb. 14 July, 1939. FO 371/23697.
[1178] Minute by Collier. 14 Jan, 1939. FO 371 / 23686.
[1179] Collier to Brownjohn. 2 Jan, 1939. FO 371 / 22299. Cited in Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', p. 517.
[1180] Minute by Collier. 27 Jan, 1939. FO 371 / 23687.
[1181] Ibid. Collier's brackets.
[1182] Letter to Chancery from Collier. 31 May, 1939. FO 371 / 23697.

Yet, at the end of July, Collier, once more, revealed that he was not completely dismissive of the possibility of improved relations between Germany and the Soviet Union. The 'utmost' he thought possible 'in the way of a Soviet German rapprochement' was 'a commercial agreement, plus a understanding to leave each other alone for the time being, since no amount of protestation on Hitler's part could convince Stalin that the Ukrainian ambitions addressed in Mein Kampf were really buried...' But, Collier concluded, such an agreement 'would be serious enough from our point of view.'[1183]

Several members of the Foreign Office, then, though not convinced, had not completely dismissed the possibility of a rapprochement as confidently as others. Two who could not dismiss the possibility at all, and in fact warned others of the likelihood of such a rapprochement were William Strang and Robert Vansittart. William Strang, chosen by Chamberlain in June to go to Moscow to assist Seeds who was unwell, became increasingly suspicious of a German - Soviet rapprochement during the later weeks of the negotiations. In a letter to Sargent in July, he wrote; 'Our need for an agreement is more immediate than theirs...The Russians have at least two alternative policies, namely, the policy of isolation, and the policy of accommodation with Germany.' [1184] After the war, Strang admitted; 'It was always present to our minds that the Russians might, as an alternative, come to an understanding with the Germans.'[1185]

Such a threat had existed in Vansittart's mind since 1934.[1186] His concerns had been heightened during the Sudetenland crisis[1187], and in 1939 his fears

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[1183] Minute by Collier. 10 July, 1939. Ibid.
[1184] Strang, *Home and Abroad,* p. 196.
[1185] Ibid.
[1186] Minute by Vansittart. 5 July,1939. Cited in Manne, 'Anglo-Soviet rapprochement', p. 729.
[1187] See *Chapter 3*.

increased further. In May, for example, he wrote to Halifax;

> I am beginning to get very uneasy about the delay in coming to an understanding with Russia. If Russia goes into isolation, this will mean a period of the sulks, which may very well be succeeded, and indeed probably will be succeeded, by closer relations with Germany. That I regard as absolutely fatal.[1188]

Vansittart's suspicions were evoked further during 1939 by the information he continued to receive from his sources abroad. Throughout the 1930s he had gained greater experience than anyone outside of the SIS (Secret Service) and the GC and CS (Government Code and Cypher School for code breaking).[1189] A number of politicians and officials had private contacts with other countries, but Vansittart had almost his own intelligence service. In particular, he received much of his information from a former British air attaché in Berlin, Group Captain Malcolm Christie.[1190] Throughout 1939, but especially from May onwards, Vansittart received information about German - Soviet relations and relayed it to both Halifax and Cadogan. At the end of May, for example, he informed Cadogan that the Germans and Soviets were in contact.[1191] On 16 June, Vansittart informed Halifax that the German military 'are delighted to have got Hitler on the path to an arrangement with Soviet Russia...' The German dictator allegedly planned 'to connive with Russia and build up a big bloc of friendly or vassal states...around the Reich.'[1192] At the same time, Vansittart heard from Theo Kordt that there was 'reliable information that Hitler has already taken steps to open talks with the Soviet Union.'[1193] Thereafter, Christie continued, from mid-June onwards, to send Vansittart at

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[1186] In his minutes Vansittart noted that there was a real danger that the Soviet Union would relapse 'into isolation' from which it would emerge by establishing 'closer relations with Germany.' See, minute by Vansittart. 4 May, 1939 VNST 2/43. Cited in Colvin, *Vansittart*, p. 321.

[1189] Ferris, 'Vansittart', p. 125.

[1190] Ibid, pp. 141-2; Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', p. 516.

[1191] Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, p. 182. 21 May, 1939; Aster, *World War*, pp. 183-4.

[1192] Minute by Vansittart. 16 June, 1939. FO 371/23009. Cited in Aster, *World War*, p. 274.

[1193] Colvin, *Vansittart*, p. 324.

least weekly intelligence reports on German preparations for an alliance with the Soviet Union.[1194]

Admittedly Vansittart's intelligence reports were, at times, inaccurate.[1195] The alleged 'Sirovy mission' was one example: on 17 May, Vansittart sent Halifax a warning from Christie that Hitler had been negotiating with Stalin through the Czech General Sirovy. Though the 'Sirovy mission' was also mentioned in a letter from Nevile Henderson , Christie's report was at least exaggerated, and was dismissed by J. M. Troutbeck , formerly British representative in Prague, as 'pure myth."[1196] Nevertheless, Vansittart's reports may help to explain why, in contrast to the rejection of rumours regarding a possible German - Soviet rapprochement by officials in the Northern Department, members of the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee, including Cadogan and Halifax, gradually accepted the danger of an agreement between Berlin and Moscow. Certainly evidence has shown that Vansittart used information he received from intelligence sources to regain his influence in Whitehall following his removal from the post of Permanent Under Secretary in December 1937. He succeeded. In particular, John Ferris has revealed that, regarding perceptions of the threat posed by Germany, Vansittart's use of intelligence enabled him to influence the minds of Halifax and Cadogan.[1197] One suggestion is that, despite its inaccuracies, the repeated warnings from Vansittart to Halifax and Cadogan had, at least some influence upon their belief in the danger of a rapprochement between Hitler and Stalin. (In addition to Vansittart's intelligence warnings, it

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[1194] Rose, *Vansittart*, pp. 236-7; Aster, *World War*, p. 275. Cited in Andrews, *Secret Service*, p. 424.

[1195] Ferris, 'Vansittart', p. 168.

[1196] Minute by Vansittart. 17 May, 1939. FO 371 / 22872; Henderson to Cadogan. 18 May, 1939. no. 552. D.B.F.P., 3, V. Cited in Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', pp. 519 - 520; Aster, *World War*, pp. 181-4; Andrews, *Secret Service*, p. 424; See also, Donald Cameron Watt, 'British Intelligence and the Coming of the Second World War in Europe', in E. R. May, ed., *Knowing One's Enemies*, (Princeton, 1986).

[1197] Ferris, 'Vansittart', pp. 130 - 131; p. 154; p. 160; pp. 162-5; p. 168.

is also worth pointing out that Cadogan, as Permanent Under Secretary, received intelligence from other sources, some unidentified, and passed on these warnings to Halifax.)[1198]

What influence did a suspicion in the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement have upon attitudes towards the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations during 1939? Looking at the minutes available one can identify a fairly strong connection between a belief in the possibility of a rapprochement, and a willingness to agree to collaboration with the Soviets.[1199] But the threat of a German - Soviet rapprochement was not a *direct* nor the *only* influence upon attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration. It is the contention of this thesis that it was such suspicion of a German - Soviet rapprochement, amongst other factors, that influenced the extent to which individuals put aside their more negative views of the Soviet Union, and accepted Britain's need of Soviet assistance.

Officials continued to harbour their own anti - Soviet prejudices. Ideological suspicion and distrust of Soviet intentions continued to be voiced throughout 1939. Lascelles, for example, spoke of 'Soviet hostility towards the greatest of the capitalist and imperialist powers'[1200] , and the threat of 'Communist propaganda."[1201] He also minuted upon what he believed to be 'the completely unreliable character of the Soviet government'[1202] , as a government that would act entirely in its own interests, and therefore try to avoid war.[1203] Oliphant similarly warned against trusting the Soviet government to act. The Soviets, he wrote 'are, I fear, entirely opportunist and could not be relied upon. They might

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[1198] Watt, 'An Intelligence Failure', p. 518.
[1199] Aster, *World War,* p. 181.
[1200] Telegram by Seeds. 28 Mar, 1939. FO 371/23677.
[1201] Mr Rokeling to Sir S. Gaselee. 18 July, 1939. FO 371/23678.
[1202] Minute by Lascelles. Cited in Newman, *March 1939,* p. 142.
[1203] Minute by Lascelles. 25 July, 1939. FO 371 / 23682.

even "remember" their being "cold-shouldered" last time and for this reason be inclined to let us down.'[1204] F. A. L. Warmin, a junior official in the Northern Department, adequately summarised the beliefs of many of his colleagues when he wrote; 'Russia is no friend of ours...'[1205]

Whether officials allowed such feelings to dictate attitudes towards collaboration, however, was greatly influenced by a belief, or not, in the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement. Thus, for example, Lascelles, who was not convinced by rumours of a German - Soviet rapprochement, remained opposed to any efforts to improve Anglo-Soviet relations. In response to a suggestion at the beginning of the year that a 'new ambassador be dispatched to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to have a very straight talk with Stalin'[1206] , in the hope of improving relations between London and Berlin, Lascelles minuted; 'Much as we need fresh ideas for coping with the German menace, I cannot help thinking that this particular scheme is fore-doomed to failure.' He continued; 'Essentially, these relations are based on a mutual and inevitable antipathy and on the realisation that the other party, in attempting to cope with the German menace, will act emphatically and solely with an eye on its own interests.'[1207]

Oliphant similarly minuted, 'To make any advances of a political nature to the Soviet would in my opinion be useless...'[1208] Regarding such a political advance to Moscow, Ashton- Gwatkin agreed.[1209] So to did Orme Sargent. Sargent, who

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[1204] Minute by Oliphant. 21 Feb,1939. FO 371 / 23697.
[1205] Minute by Warmin. 3 Jan, 1939. FO 371/23677.
[1206] Minute by Caccia. 3 Jan, 1939. Ibid.
[1207] Minute by Lascelles. 3 Jan, 1939. Ibid.
[1208] Minute by Oliphant. 21 Feb,1939. FO 371/23697.
[1209] Minute by Gwatkin. 21 Feb,1939. Ibid.

had voiced his own ideological suspicion of the Soviets throughout the 1930s[1210], but doubted the evidence of a German - Soviet rapprochement, unsurprisingly favoured the government's decision to prioritise Poland above the Soviet Union in March.[1211] Thereafter he thought London should seek nothing more than economic assistance from the Soviets in the event of war,[1212] and towards the end of negotiations, joined others and voiced his opposition to the Soviet proposal of indirect aggression.[1213]

A. S. Halford recorded his opposition to military collaboration with the Soviets. 'To risk arousing a large section of public opinion (not only in this country and Europe, generally, but in the Dominions also) by...an...attempt to secure Soviet military collaboration...would' he minuted in April, 'seem both dangerous and illogical now that the Polish guarantee has become a fact."[1214] Furthermore, he held a pessimistic view of the success of any political negotiations. In July, Oliphant received an article written by M. Alexandre Kazem Beg (a Russian Caucasian and the leader of the Young - Russian Party abroad) which discussed the mentality of the Soviet leaders with particular reference to their attitude towards Anglo-Soviet negotiations. Halford minuted in response:

> This interesting document rehearses several well known facts (Soviet "provincialism" symbolised by the transfer of the seat of government from St Petersburg to Moscow, suspicion of contractual agreements, the Asiatic tendency towards bargaining etc) but does not indicate how we can quickly overcome the obstacles in the way of an Anglo-Soviet agreement. The appeal for greater understanding of the Soviet psychology looks well on paper, but is ideally not constructive in fact.

[1210] Minute by Sargent. 17 June, 1936. Cited in Douglas Little, 'Red Scare, 1936: Anti-Bolshevism and the Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. XXIII, (1988). p. 297; Minute by Sargent. 8 Jan, 1938. no. 34. D.B.F.P, 3, XVIII.

[1211] Minute by Sargent. 20 Mar, 1939. FO 371/23061.

[1212] Ibid.

[1213] Corbin to Bonnet. 4 July, 1939. no. 89. D.D.F., 2, XVII. Cited in Watt, *How War Came*, p. 378.

[1214] Minute by Halford. 4 Apr, 1939. FO 371/23677.

> The very "provincialism" of the Kremlin Govt...precludes any possibility of our understanding the Russian point of view, since the constructive understanding must be mutual and by the same token, the Russians are in no circumstances prepared to understand our point of view or even to concede that we have one. From the very beginning, the Soviet negotiations have not only stood out for the "maximum demand" but have increased it - there has been no Asiatic bargaining here. And, given the undoubted suspicion which M. Stalin and co. entertain of contractual agreements the position seems pretty hopeless.[1215]

Accepting the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement slightly more than others meant that Laurence Collier, in contrast, appreciated the disastrous consequences for Britain and the West if Soviet cooperation was lost. How did this influence Collier's attitude towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration?[1216] Though Collier did not state specifically his support for the acceptance of Soviet proposals during 1939, he did urge the British government to collaborate with Moscow. Collier repeatedly stated his belief that the Soviet Union ought not to be deliberately excluded by the British government as, he acknowledged, it had been during the Czechoslovakian crisis in 1938.[1217] In January, Collier supported any attempt to 'clarify and improve Anglo-Soviet relations.' He noted:

> ...the policy of keeping the Russians at arms length, which we pursued during the Czechoslovak crisis (and which, according to some neutral diplomats..., we are still pursuing on the Spanish non-intervention committee,...) has been a mistake in so far as it has gratuitously advertised to Hitler and Mussolini and the Japanese that they can deal with each of us in isolation...[1218]

Collier went on to suggest 'giving Stalin at least a negative assurance that we

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[1215] Minute by Halford. 25 July,1939. FO 371/23697.
[1216] This was not the only influence upon Collier's attitude towards collaboration with the Soviets. He maintained his view that Fascism, not Communism, posed Britain's greatest danger during 1939, and this was an important influence on his decision to overlook his more negative views of the Soviet Union. See, minute by Collier. 25 Jan, 1939. Ibid.
[1217] Indeed, Collier noted in a separate minute that Britain's political record with Russia was 'notoriously unsatisfactory'. See, minute by Collier. 9 Mar, 1939. FO 371/23677.
[1218] Minute by Collier. 3 Jan, 1939. Ibid.

will do nothing directly or indirectly to assist Hitler's eastern plans...' Seeds, Collier proposed, could seek an interview with Stalin on the matter and state that the British government would

> give ...a solemn assurance that we will lend no assistance to German, Italian, or Japanese schemes against you - indeed, you may be sure that in our own interests we shall do what we can to check them, though as you know already, we cannot give you a guarantee of armed assistance in hypothetical circumstances any more than you can give one to us.[1219]

Collier thought this would 'be likely to have some small effect at least on the Germans', and a declaration, he noted, 'might even help to some small extent to stiffen their [the Soviet government' s] attitude towards the Japanese,...'[1220]

In March, Collier repeated his conviction that the Soviet government ought to be involved in negotiations over future resistance of aggression. At a time when the British government was deliberating the nature of future Anglo-Soviet relations, the Head of the Northern Department minuted:

> We may have our doubts as to the possible value of Soviet help in our present troubles, but so long as H.M Government hold the view, which I understand them to do now, that it is to our advantage to retain at the very least the benevolent neutrality of the Soviet government, we ought not, I submit, to blow hot and cold on this question of political consultation with them...[1221]

Nor did he believe that the government's changed strategy regarding the resistance to future aggression was a justifiable excuse to exclude the Soviet Union. 'The fact that we are now proceeding on another track than that which we originally adopted in the matter of organising resistance to German aggression', he wrote, 'does not alter the other fact that Soviet goodwill is of advantage to us...'[1222] Indeed, Collier's notes revealed his aggravation at the

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[1219] Ibid.
[1220] Ibid
[1221] Minute by Collier. 28 Mar, 1939. FO 371 / 23681.
[1222] Ibid.

complaints of the Polish and Rumanian governments regarding Anglo-Soviet relations. He noted that 'in this particular case it was known to everyone, including the Poles, Finns and Rumanians, that consultation had taken place...'[1223]

As well as supporting some form of collaboration between Moscow and London regarding the resistance to German aggression, Collier also suggested a mutual agreement with the Soviet government regarding resistance of aggression in the Far East. 'If,..., the Far East situation is about to become critical (as recent telegrams from Tokyo and and Shanghai seem to indicate)', he noted, 'I think there is something to be said for considering an approach to the Soviet Government with a view to coordinating a policy of resistance to Japanese aggression."[1224] R. S. Howe, a junior official in the Northern Department, agreed that 'the time is coming when we should consider the question of an approach to the Soviet Government with a view to coordinating a policy of resistance to Japanese aggression."[1225] He did note, however, '...the obvious danger...that an Anglo-Soviet rapprochement would drive Japan more completely into the arms of the "Axis" powers."[1226] Collier also added that such an approach should only be considered 'on the assumption that we ourselves are prepared to take up a firm attitude towards Japan in any case and give evidence of this before we say anything at Moscow.' The Head of the Northern Department acknowledged and understood Moscow's doubts about Britain's sincerity. 'At present', he admitted, 'there is nothing to prove to the Soviet government - or, indeed, to the world at large - that we will not when it comes to the point, be as complaisant to the Japanese as we have been to Hitler and Mussolini..."[1227]

[1223] Ibid.
[1224] Minute by Collier. 21 Feb, 1939. FO 371 / 23697.
[1225] Minute by R. S. Howe. Ibid.
[1226] Ibid.
[1227] Minute by Collier. Ibid.

William Strang who increasingly became convinced that an agreement with Berlin was a genuine alternative for the Soviets equally appeared to support some form of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration. In 1938, Strang had opposed the complete exclusion of the Soviet Union, but he had never spoken out in favour of an alliance. At the beginning of 1939, Strang expressed his personal hostility towards, and distrust of, the Soviet government: 'The Soviet government', he wrote, 'have attacked H.M.G. in the past for their failure to take up a definite attitude towards German aggression. Now that H.M.G. have done so, the Soviet government sit back and wash their hands of the whole affair.'[1228] Indeed, his views were not dissimilar to those of Chamberlain. On 3 April, for example, Strang wrote of Moscow; 'It would not be at all contrary to their desires to see Great Britain and France at grips with Germany and in process of destroying each other.'[1229] When in Moscow during the later months of the negotiations, however, Strang reported favourably with regard to an alliance. The Soviet government, he thought, was 'themselves anxious to reach an agreement.' He elaborated:

> they [the Soviet government] would hardly have entered upon these negotiations at all unless they thought that a Three Power Agreement was to their advantage... These negotiations are as much an adventure for them as they are for us. If we do not trust them, they equally do not trust us. They are not, fundamentally, a friendly power; but they, like us, are driven to this course by force of necessity.[1230]

By July, in contrast to Chamberlain's desire to see an end to the negotiations, Strang advised on how to secure their successful conclusion. He urged appreciation of Soviet suspicions and favoured the sending of senior officials to lead the military mission to Moscow.[1231]

[1228] Minutes by Strang 3, Apr, 1939. FO 371/23016. Cited in Aster, *World War*, p. 158.
[1229] Ibid.
[1230] Strang, *Home and Abroad*, p. 182.
[1231] Strang to Sargent. 20 July, 1939. no. 376. D.B.F.P., 3, VI.

The most consistent supporter of closer Anglo-Soviet relations, however, was also the official who had remained convinced of the threat of a German - Soviet rapprochement the longest, namely, Robert Vansittart. At the beginning of the year a number of officials had minuted in response to the suggestion of sending a 'new ambassador' to Moscow to talk to Stalin in the hope of improving Anglo-Soviet relations.[1232] Most had opposed the suggestion. Collier suggested Seeds arrange an interview with Stalin. Vansittart, in contrast, called for a Cabinet minister to go to Moscow as a gesture of British sincerity. '...What the Russians need is a gesture. Let us provide that gesture by sending a Cabinet minister to Russia."[1233] The Anglo-Soviet trade agreement would provide the perfect 'cover' for initiating such a meeting with the Soviet dictator, Vansittart noted.[1234] By May, Vansittart had become increasingly concerned by the slow progress of the negotiations. He wrote numerous minutes to the Foreign Secretary impressing upon him that all considerations were irrelevant besides the need for an alliance with the Soviet government.[1235] His concern had been particularly heightened by what appeared to be a proposal by Pope Pius XII to convene another conference at the end of April to which several governments were invited to discuss the prevention of war. The Soviet government was not invited.[1236] Vansittart believed the British government was capable of concluding another Munich, once more excluding Moscow. Oliver Harvey noted in his diary that Vansittart was 'full of mistrust and wants to insist on Russia being invited.'[1237] Vansittart was alarmed at the prospect of further Soviet exclusion. He openly criticised what he thought had been Britain's unjustified treatment of Moscow

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[1232] See, p. 255.

[1233] Minute by Vansittart. 3 Jan, 1939. FO 371/23677; Hugh Dalton also commented that Vansittart thought the political implications of Hudson's visit far more important than the issue of trade. See, Diary entry. 28 Mar, 1939. 1/20/20. Dalton Papers.

[1234] Ibid.

[1235] Minute by Vansittart. 16 May, 1939. FO 371/20366; Minute by Vansittart VNST 3/2; Crozier interview with Vansittart. 13 Apr, 1939. Crozier Papers C/5. Cited in Aster, *World War,* p. 178.

[1236] Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope*, p. 224; Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries,* pp. 178-9. 5 May, 1939.

[1237] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 288. 4 May, 1939.

throughout 1938[1238] , and was, therefore, willing to make every effort to ensure Soviet inclusion. On 17 May, for example, Vansittart agreed to Halifax's suggestion that he use his close relations with Maisky[1239] to try and secure the acceptance of Britain's latest proposal. Unfortunately, though Vansittart was able to offer staff conversations as an incentive, the basic proposal remained the same, namely a Soviet declaration of aid in the event of war.[1240] Even Vansittart's close relations with the Soviet ambassador could not persuade the Kremlin to endanger its own country with no offer of support.

There were other factors that influenced Vansittart and other officials to overlook the anti-Soviet prejudices each held. Most of the officials that supported closer relations during 1939, had also favoured relations with Moscow during 1938, and the reasons remained the same. Laurence Collier, for example, maintained his belief that fascism, not communism, posed the greatest danger for Britain.[1241] Vansittart continued to emphasise Soviet military potential and Britain's *need* of such an ally in the event of war.[1242] Indeed, Strang, and Warmin, noted their appreciation of the Soviet Union's military value as an ally.[1243] Nevertheless, one cannot deny that during 1939 a strong connection existed between suspicion of a German - Soviet rapprochement and an ability to overlook anti-Soviet prejudices enough to influence attitudes towards collaborating with Moscow. For this reason it is unfortunate that more officials could not be persuaded of its likelihood.

After the announcement of the German - Soviet non aggression pact at the end of August, Foreign Office officials blamed the intelligence services for not

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[1238] Minute by Vansittart. 3 Jan, 1939. FO 371/23677.
[1239] Colvin, *Vansittart*, p. 33; Dilks, *Cadogan Diaries*, pp. 181-2. 19 May, 1939.
[1240] Aster, *World War*, pp. 178-9.
[1241] Minute by Collier. 25 Jan, 1939. FO 371/23697.
[1242] Minute by Vansittart. 9 Mar, 1939. FO 371/23677.
[1243] Minute by F. A. L. Warmin. 3 Jan, 1939. Ibid.

providing sufficient information warning of a rapprochement. 'The fact remains', wrote Orme Sargent, 'that we were never told that the Germans and Russians had started negotiations with one another - which was the only thing that mattered.'[1244] Although information had at times been 'notoriously difficult' to obtain and had been 'contradictory' or had 'come from persons of questionable reliability'[1245] , the sheer amount of rumours received hinting at some form of German - Soviet rapprochement would have suggested to any objective observer that something was occurring.[1246] But too many made the erroneous assumption, like Chamberlain, that Hitler would allow his own ideological hostility towards the Soviet Union to dictate his foreign policy.

Not everyone dismissed the rumours and possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement altogether, and some were convinced of its likelihood. This had a prominent influence on their attitudes towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration. It was not the only influence. Soviet military and strategic potential, for example, continued to be raised by officials such as Vansittart. The ambassador, William Seeds, spoke more of the threat of Soviet isolationism than a rapprochement. What he, Vansittart, Strang and others did share, however, was an appreciation of Britain's *need* to secure a Soviet ally as soon as possible, and a willingness to allow this to overshadow any negative, prejudicial, views of the Soviet Union.

[1244] Andrews, *Secret Service,* p. 426; Minute by Sargent. 3 Sept,1939. FO 371/23686. Cited in Aster, *World War,* pp. 317-18.
[1245] Ibid, pp. 425-6; Memorandum by Collier. 26 Aug, 1939. FO 371/23686. Cited in Ibid.
[1246] The Military Intelligence Division, for example, referred to an 'unusually large number of rumours' during June of a Russo-German rapprochement. See Andrews, *Secret Service,* p. 424.

Chapter Eight:

Attitudes of the 'Anti-Appeasers' towards the Soviet Union, March 1939 - August 1939.

Throughout March - August 1939, the anti-appeasers remained supportive of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration. Indeed, their support strengthened, as those who were previously ambiguous about what type of agreement they supported specifically demanded an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance by May. The guarantee of Poland was accepted, but not accepted as an excuse to reject Soviet proposals. As Hitler's aggressive intentions became increasingly obvious, the need to overlook personal prejudices towards the Soviet Union and accept Moscow's proposals became, in the minds of the anti-appeasers, even more urgent. This was exemplified in their own willingness to continue supporting an alliance, despite Molotov's insistence upon a clause of indirect aggression.

Following Hitler's takeover of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the anti-appeasers learnt of the government's intention to guarantee Poland. Before one can examine their attitudes towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration during this year, it is important to analyse their response to what historians, and politicians at the time, deemed to be such a crucial development. When the guarantee to Poland was announced in the House of Commons on 3 April, 1939, nearly all of the politicians looked at in this chapter supported the guarantee and congratulated the Prime Minister on his decision.[1247] Archibald Sinclair welcomed the guarantee as a deterrent to Hitler.[1248] Arthur Greenwood and Hugh Dalton agreed.[1249] Anthony Eden stated his confidence in the Prime Minister's decision. He claimed the guarantee to Poland would 'have the most

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[1247] Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 218.

[1248] Ibid.

[1249] Attlee, leader of the Labour party, was not present at the debate on 3 April due to illness. Cols. 2478; 2480; 2569-2570. 3 Apr, 1939. 345 HC Deb 5s.

excellent effect' and would be of great 'deterrent value.'[1250] Despite fearing that the guarantee had caused resentment in Moscow, Eden's former Secretary, Oliver Harvey agreed.[1251] Winston Churchill expressed 'the most complete agreement with the Prime Minister' on the matter[1252] , and Lloyd George congratulated Chamberlain 'upon the initiation of this new policy and upon the reversal of the old policy which we have so often deplored in this House."[1253]

Yet, with the exception of Oliver Harvey who was wrongly convinced of Poland's superior military strength, all who supported the guarantee also maintained their demand for collaboration with the Soviets. Their initial congratulatory attitude towards the guarantee in no way indicated that it replaced the importance of securing the Soviet Union as an ally. On the night before the guarantee was concluded, for example, Greenwood accompanied Hugh Dalton to see Chamberlain in the cabinet room. Referring to the Prime Minister's decision to guarantee Poland the next day (31 March), Dalton warned that 'he would never get away with it...unless he brought in the Russians.'[1254] During the debate in the House of Commons on 3 April, Greenwood stressed that the House could not 'ignore the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.'[1255] It was, Dalton agreed,

> ...vitally important the Soviet Union should be brought into this combination...We hope that soon we shall pass from general declarations of friendliness to some evidence of positive and continuous cooperation between London and Moscow with a view to bringing the Soviet Union, with all its tremendous forces, effectively into this combination against aggression?[1256]

Winston Churchill warned that to 'stop here with a guarantee to Poland, would

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[1250] Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, pp. 218 - 219.
[1251] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 272. 3 Apr, 1939.
[1252] Ibid, p. 218.
[1253] Col. 2505 3 Apr, 1939. 345 HC Deb 5s.
[1254] Dalton, *Memoirs*, p. 238.
[1255] Cols. 2478; 2480 3 Apr, 1939. 345 HC Deb 5s.
[1256] Col. 2570 . Ibid.

be to halt in no man's land under the fire of both trench lines and without the shelter of either."[1257] Thus, the British government could not risk losing a Soviet ally;

> No one can say that there is not a solid identity of interest between the western democracies and Soviet Russia, and we must do nothing to obstruct the natural play of that identity of interest...The worst folly, which no one proposes we should commit, would be to chill and drive away any natural cooperation which Soviet Russia in her own deep interests feels it necessary to afford.[1258]

His friend and fellow M.P., Robert Boothby, reiterated the plea.[1259]

The anti-appeasers did not ignore the issue of Polish opposition to Soviet involvement in a collective bloc. Some, including Churchill and Attlee, believed the government had exaggerated the opposition to Soviet involvement. 'It is suggested' Attlee said in the House of Commons, 'that the real trouble is that certain states will not line up if the USSR are on the alliance. I believe that is vastly exaggerated."[1260] Churchill told the Soviet ambassador, Ivan Maisky, that he believed it was still possible that the Polish and Rumanian governments 'might be prepared at a pinch to let you in.' The condition, he added, was that they 'would certainly want some assurances that you would eventually get out."[1261] Both Churchill and Attlee underestimated the strength of opposition within Poland and Rumania. Others, such as Dalton, Sinclair and Lloyd George, did not. They were fully aware of the animosity towards the Soviet Union amongst these governments. But, they argued, such views should not determine foreign policy decisions, especially regarding the Soviet Union. The opinions of the Poles and Rumanians, they believed, were of secondary importance. Of greater importance was securing the Soviet Union in any collective bloc

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[1257] Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, p. 218.
[1258] Col. 2502 3 Apr, 1939. 345 HC Deb 5s.
[1259] Col. 10. 8 May, 1939. 347 Ibid.
[1260] Cols. 1819-1825 19 May, 1939. Ibid.
[1261] Harold Nicolson. 3 Apr,1939. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill*, pp. 1429-30.

established. The reason for this, each were clear, was Soviet military potential and the strategic necessity of its inclusion. During the debate on the Polish guarantee, Archibald Sinclair told fellow M.P.s:

> I know the difficulties with regard to Russia. I know the distrust of Russia that is felt in Poland - a legacy of Russian misgovernment in the days of partition, and, of course, the Piludski tradition, which still dominates Polish politics, is not friendly to Russia. Nevertheless, the task of bringing Russia into co-operation with us in resistance to aggression is one of supreme importance.[1262]

Hugh Dalton referred more specifically to the strategic necessity of Soviet involvement if an effective bloc of aggression was to be achieved.[1263] The Labour M.P. had met several Polish representatives and appreciated the difficulty of getting Moscow and Warsaw to 'pull together, even now."[1264] Though Dalton, like Churchill, did not rule out the possibility of Poland and Rumanian acquiescing in Soviet involvement[1265] , this was not, for him, the crux of the matter. Not only was the Soviet Union's involvement crucial for the West, but it was also crucial for Poland's own survival. Support in the air and supplies could only be provided for the Poles by the Soviet Union.[1266]

Lloyd George spoke of the strategic necessity of Soviet involvement with the Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky. 'You know', he told the ambassador,

> ...I have never had a high opinion of Chamberlain, but what he is doing now is breaking records for stupidity...we are giving guarantees to Poland and Rumania, but what can we do for them if they are attacked by Hitler? Practically nothing. Geographically these two countries are situated that we cannot reach them. Even arms and munitions can only be supplied to them through Soviet territory. The key to their salvation lies in your

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[1262] Col. 2493 3 Apr, 1939. 345 HC Deb 5s.
[1263] Dalton, *Memoirs*, p. 238.
[1264] Ibid, pp. 240-241; Diary entry. 28 Mar, 1939.1/20/20. Dalton Papers.
[1265] Diary entry. 12 Apr, 1939. 1/20/36. Dalton Papers.
[1266] Ibid. 2 Apr, 1939. 1/20/29. Dalton Papers; Dalton, *Memoirs*, pp. 240-241.

> hands. Without Russia nothing can be done....So...there should have been an agreement with Moscow. But what does Chamberlain do? Without coming to any agreement with the Soviet Union, and in fact behind its back, he distributes 'guarantees' right and left to countries in Eastern Europe. What crying folly! What a disgrace for British diplomacy![1267]

Consequently, when Chamberlain informed the House of Commons that he believed Poland would represent the second, eastern front of resistance in the event of war, 'Lloyd George burst into laughter and began to gibe Chamberlain.' The former Prime Minister explained;

> Poland had no airforce to speak of, an inadequately mechanised army, worse than mediocre armaments, and that Poland was weak internally - economically and politically. Without active help from the USSR, therefore, no "Eastern Front" was possible.

'If we are going in without the help of Russia we are walking into a trap', he continued. 'It is the only country whose army can get there...'[1268] Soon after, The Times caustically described Lloyd George's sober warning as 'an outburst of inconsolable pessimism', remarking that 'he seems to inhabit an odd and remote world of his own.' But Liddell Hart, who had earlier told Lloyd George that 'there was', in his opinion, 'little chance of checking Hitler except by securing the support of Russia' because it was 'the only power that could give Poland direct support and thus provide a deterrent to Hitler', aptly pointed out that 'Lloyd George was at this crucial moment for once in accord with the view of the military authorities - and indeed, of anyone who had the slightest grasp of the practical conditions."[1269]

Not only did Lloyd George point out the strategic necessity of the Soviet Union's involvement, he also made clear his belief that Warsaw's political opposition to the inclusion of Moscow, could, and should, be dismissed:

[1267] Maisky, *Who Helped Hitler,* p. 111.
[1268] Liddell Hart, *Memoirs,* p. 219.
[1269] Ibid, p. 222; p. 219.

> If Russia has not been brought into this matter because of certain feelings the Poles have that they do not want the Russians there, it is for us to declare the conditions, and unless the Poles are prepared to accept the only conditions with which we can successfully help them, the responsibility must be theirs.[1270]

The former Prime Minister had raised a crucial point conveniently overlooked by those who used the opposition of the Poles to excuse their own aversion to collaborating with the Soviets, namely, that Poland really had little choice, and that London could dictate conditions of resistance.

Following Hitler's take over of Czechoslovakia and the guarantees to both Poland and Rumania, then, the anti-appeasers continued to call for the collaboration many had now been urging for over a year. Those that had called specifically for an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance during 1938 continued to do so. But between March and May, they were joined by those previously vague and uncommitted about exactly what form of Anglo-Soviet collaboration they wanted. In March, for example, the National Council of Labour issued a statement which called upon the government to establish a 'peace pact' with France, the Soviet Union, and any other nations willing to join a collective bloc to resist German aggression."[1271] Clement Attlee still referred to 'unity' between the three countries.[1272] By May, however, with still no agreement concluded, Attlee spoke out specifically in favour of an alliance. 'The best hope of preventing war', he told the government, 'is to get a firm union between Britain, France and the USSR as the nucleus of a world alliance against aggression, an alliance so strong that it is not a question of winning a war, but of preventing a war.'[1273] Dalton, now really the prominent spokesman for the Labour party on

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[1270] Cols. 2509-2510. 3 Apr, 1939. 345 HC Deb 5s.
[1271] Daily Herald 29 March, 1939, p. 10. Cited in William Rayburn Tucker, *Attitude of the British Labour Party Towards European and Collective Security Problems, 1920-1939.* Theses presented to the University of Geneva, 1950, p. 235.
[1272] Col. 19. 13 Apr, 1939. 346 HC Deb 5s.
[1273] Col. 1823. 19 May, 1939. 347 Ibid.

the issue of collaboration with Soviets[1274] , repeated his support for an alliance. Dalton would accept nothing less. He was not prepared, for example, to accept an agreement of Soviet neutrality despite the fact that it still might ensure Soviet supplies.[1275] Instead, he recalled in his diary; 'I...urged an Anglo-Franco-Soviet military alliance against any aggression in Europe, Asia or North Africa.'[1276] He believed the Soviet proposal of an alliance on 18 April represented 'surely a most dazzling prize to be seized instantly, with both hands, and triumphantly displayed to the world.'[1277]

Winston Churchill similarly continued to demand an alliance. He called for the Soviet Union's 'full inclusion in our defensive bloc.'[1278] He, too, later believed '...that Britain and France should have accepted the Russian offer, proclaimed the Triple Alliance, and left the method by which it would be made effective in case of war to be adjusted between the allies engaged against a common foe."[1279] Churchill was supported in parliament and in the press by Robert Boothby. On 14 March he had urged the government that it was time to initiate talks.[1280] Boothby perceived the future for Britain would be 'dark' unless the government concluded a 'defensive alliance.' The key to this alliance, he emphasised, was 'unquestionably Russia.'[1281] In 1939, Boothby and Churchill were joined in their demands for an alliance by Edward Spears.[1282]

Lord Robert Cecil, who, during 1938, had attended private meetings along with Churchill and others in order to discuss pressing the government to accept

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[1274] Diary entry. 30 Mar, 1939. 1/20/27. Dalton Papers.
[1275] Ibid. 1/20/40 12.4.39. Dalton Papers.
[1276] Dalton, *Memoirs*, pp. 248-9.
[1277] Ibid, p. 249.
[1278] Col. 34 13 Apr, 1939. 346 HC Deb 5s
[1279] Dalton, *Memoirs*, p. 249.
[1280] Letter to *Daily Telegraph* 14 Mar, 1939. G 3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.
[1281] Speech at Edinburgh 4 Mar, 1939. Ibid.
[1282] Egremont, *Under Two Flags*, p. 143.

Soviet proposals, continued during 1939 to offer his support to several individuals and organisations prominent in the campaign to secure Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration.[1283] Soon after Hitler's invasion of Prague, for example, Cecil gave his support for a plan to hold a large meeting at the Queen's Hall which aimed to 'call most urgently for immediate and active co-operation between all peace-loving nations, with special reference to France and the Soviet Union.'[1284] Lloyd George also received many letters throughout 1939 asking for his opinion, and his support, on the issue of the Soviet Union and an alliance. The International Peace Campaign was one such organisation.[1285] In addition, Lloyd George corresponded with Victor Gollancz, editor of The Left News which aimed to highlight the necessity of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. A leaflet they distributed in April, for example, protested; 'If we were involved in a war against Germany and Italy with Russia outside we should be in the greatest peril. But...if the Dictators knew they had to face such a combination, it would never come to war.' Lloyd George thought the leaflet was 'most valuable'[1286] , and in the same month agreed to talk at a rally, organised by Gollancz, in favour of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance.[1287]

One who did not speak out in favour of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance during the early weeks of negotiations was the former Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden. Still influenced primarily by party loyalty and ambition[1288] , Eden was not prepared to press the issue, let alone oppose Chamberlain. Eden recalled later,

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[1283] Letter to Cecil from General Secretary of The Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction. 17 Mar, 1939. p. 66. Add 51183. Cecil Papers.
[1284] Letter to Cecil from Victor Gollancz. 17 Mar, 1939, p. 24. Ibid; Letter to Victor Gollancz from Cecil. 17 Mar, 1939, p. 26. Ibid.
[1285] Letter to Lloyd George from the Secretary of the British Committee of the International Peace Campaign. 25 Mar, 1939. G/45/1/93. Lloyd George Papers.
[1286] Letter to Lloyd George from Victor Gollancz.13 Apr, 1939. G/45/2/45; G/45/2/46 . Ibid.
[1287] Letter to Lloyd George from Victor Gollancz enclosing agenda for Empress Hall Rally. 19 Apr,1939. G/46/1/11. Ibid; Lloyd George accepts invitation to speak at rally. 20 Apr, 1939. G/46/1/112. Ibid.
[1288] Dutton,*Eden*, p. 135.

for example, his suggestion,

> ...to Chamberlain and Halifax, that in order to make a beginning with the Soviets, we should make use of the fact that France, Russia, Turkey and ourselves were all parties to the Straits convention. The four countries, might, I thought, issue some form of joint declaration, perhaps about preserving the status quo in the eastern Mediterranean. Lord Halifax replied that the difficulties were too great and I did not press the idea.[1289]

By May, however, Anthony Eden joined others in dismissing the political excuses put forward by the government[1290] and openly called for an acceptance of Soviet proposals. At the beginning of May, Oliver Harvey noted of Eden; '....A. E. is very disturbed about our Soviet negotiations which he thinks lack boldness and imagination: we ought to agree to a tripartite alliance with France and Soviet Russia."[1291] On 19 May, Eden himself told the House of Commons that what he wanted to see was

> ...a triple alliance between this country, France and Russia based on complete reciprocity; that is to say, that if Russia were attacked and we and France would go to her help, and if we or France were attacked Russia would come to our aid. Then, if any other nations of Europe were victims of aggression and called for help, we should make it clear that we would be prepared, all three of us, to give that help at once and to the fullest extent of our resources.[1292]

Eden appreciated that what he had suggested probably went much further than the government wanted to go, but he was convinced that if the British government was to succeed in the negotiations, action would have to be taken as soon as possible.[1293]

In fact, members of the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee had, by this stage, also begun to seriously consider accepting Soviet proposals for an Anglo-

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[1289] Eden, *The Reckoning*, p. 54.
[1290] Col. 1860. 19 May, 1939. 347 HC Deb 5s.
[1291] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 289. 8 May, 1939.
[1292] Eden, *The Reckoning*, pp. 559-560.
[1293] Ibid, pp. 54-55.

French-Soviet alliance. A key motivation in persuading ministers to put aside their ideological distrust of the Soviets was an increasing suspicion and fear of a German - Soviet rapprochement. Anthony Eden was similarly motivated by such suspicion. In his memoirs, Eden wrote;

> In any attempt to rally the peace-loving nations of Europe, Russia's position was capital... Stalin was the arbiter of Russian policy and he might,..., come to terms with Hitler at any moment. The repeated public expression of hatred for each others systems and intentions could be swiftly expunged in dictatorships.[1294]

Oliver Harvey, too, mentioned the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement, especially following the news of Litvinov's removal on 4 May. 'News of Litvinoff's resignation came as a complete surprise...', he wrote in his diary, '...Does it mean Russia will turn from the West towards isolation? And if so, won't she inevitably wobble into Germany's arms?'[1295] Days later, his suspicion grew. On 7 May he wrote;

> Still great obscurity about Russia though Maisky assures - as he must - that there is to be no change - Potemkin says the same to the Turks. But I do not like it and there are hints here and there that it may mean a Russo-German rapprochement.[1296]

Interestingly, however, neither Churchill, Sinclair, nor any other supporter of an alliance outside of government referred to the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement. It was never openly debated in the House of Commons and it was hardly mentioned in private papers. Instead, for these individuals, the motivation continued to be an increasing realisation of Hitler's aggressive foreign policy ambitions and, inextricably linked to this, an appreciation of the fact that Britain *needed* the Soviet Union either to prevent war[1297] , or to effectively resist aggression in the event of war. For many, especially Labour

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[1294] Ibid, p. 53; pp. 55-56.
[1295] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 287. 4 May, 1939.
[1296] Ibid, pp. 288 - 289. 7 May, 1939.
[1297] Maisky, *Who Helped Hitler*, p. 116.

and Liberal members, Moscow's value remained its ability to deter Hitler and so preserve peace. Arthur Greenwood told the government; 'however you may assess the military value of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, there can be no question that she might well prove to be the final, decisive and smashing factor on the side of keeping peace in the world."[1298] Archibald Sinclair did not want to see a repeat of Munich,[1299] and was convinced that Britain and its allies could not 'preserve peace without Russia."[1300]

Amongst the Conservatives, Robert Boothby expressed his appreciation of the Soviet Union's huge resources. He, like many others who urged an alliance with Moscow during 1939, did not ignore the military weaknesses still existing within the Soviet Union. However, he was convinced of the potential that remained. 'You hear stories in certain quarters about the inefficiency of the Soviet army', he told an Edinburgh audience, 'but, whether they are true or not the indisputable fact remains that Russia is one of the greatest powers of the world, and her resources, both in men and material are practically unlimited.'[1301] Consequently, he believed; 'No single step could be taken better calculated to avert the threatening world war...' than to agree to an alliance.[1302] Even Anthony Eden, acknowledged Soviet strategic and military importance once he decided to confess his support of an alliance. [1303] He warned the government 'if you are going to build a deterrent it is folly not to build the most powerful deterrent in your power.'[1304]

[1298] Cols. 2479-2780. 3 Apr, 1939. 345 HC Deb 5s.
[1299] Neville Chamberlain to his sister 5 August, 1939. (Templewood Papers). Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 1583.
[1300] Cols. 1874-5 .19 May, 1939. 347 HC Deb 5s.
[1301] Speech at Edinburgh 4 Mar, 1939. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers
[1302] Ibid.
[1303] Eden, *The Reckoning*, p. 559.
[1304] Cols. 1855-6 19 May, 1939. 347 HC Deb 5s.

Lloyd George[1305] , Churchill and Hugh Dalton also continued to emphasise the importance of a Soviet ally as a deterrent against aggression.[1306] However, by 1939, they increasingly perceived the value of an alliance as being primarily in terms of securing a wartime ally. Dalton added that the Soviet Union was the only country which could assist the allies in the Pacific where both France and Britain had interests.[1307] Later he would insist on the importance of a Soviet ally in the battle against Japan.[1308] The importance of securing Soviet cooperation in Churchill's mind was evident in his pleas to Chamberlain:

> I beg His Majesty's Government to get some of these brutal truths into their heads. Without any effective Eastern Front, there can be no satisfactory defence of our interests in the West, and without Russia there can be no effective Eastern Front.[1309]

Added to this realisation was an increasing recognition of Soviet suspicions of the West. Anxiety rose largely as a result of the information Maisky continued to supply regarding Moscow's mistrust of British sincerity.[1310] The Soviet government had already threatened isolationism once before. As early as March, Maisky had told Oliver Harvey that Moscow very much mistrusted London.' Harvey consequently thought there would be 'a strong movement towards isolation now.'[1311] Soviet proposals in 1939, Maisky told Dalton, were designed to test Chamberlain's sincerity.[1312] Through its rejections of Soviet proposals the government was failing the test, and this must have weighed on the minds of those who realised the extent of Soviet potential in the deterrence and effective resistance of aggression. Sinclair, in particular, tried to impress

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[1305] Cols. 1818-24. Ibid.
[1306] Cols. 1843-47. Ibid; Eden, *The Reckoning,* p. 559.
[1307] Col. 127-8. 13 Apr, 1939. 346 HC Deb 5s.
[1308] Diary entry. 28 June, 1939. 1/20/74. Dalton Papers.
[1309] Col. 1848. 19 May, 1939. HC Deb 5s.
[1310] Diary entry. 28 Mar, 1939. 1/20/20. Dalton Papers.
[1311] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 259. 9 March, 1939.
[1312] Ibid.

upon others the existence and importance of Soviet suspicion of the West.[1313] So, too, did Churchill. In most of his speeches, he pointed out the benefits of securing an agreement with regard to reducing the mutual suspicion that existed between the powers.[1314] When Molotov replaced Maxim Litvinov as Commissar for Foreign Affairs at the beginning of May, the resentment and suspicion of the Soviet government appeared to be confirmed. Maisky warned Dalton that although Molotov's appointment did not, in fact, signify a change in Soviet foreign policy, this could not be ruled out if there was no progress.[1315] Thereafter, M.P.s continued to stress the importance of removing the 'conditions of distrust and mutual suspicion...'[1316] It was, Harvey appreciated, 'essential if we are to get our agreement to take the most extraordinary precautions that our procedure or approach does not arouse mistrust.'[1317] Unfortunately, and as Harvey acknowledged, Neville Chamberlain could not see this.

The result of such anxiety coupled with a strong conviction of Britain's need of a Soviet ally continued to motivate the anti-appeasers to overlook their own attitudes towards the Soviet system and government. Churchill, especially, continued to publicly condemn the Soviet system and ideology throughout the negotiations. 'There is Nazi Fascist ideology, and the Communist ideology. Britain and France are equally opposed to both', he told an audience in May.[1318] Churchill told Maisky in private; 'Now I don't care for your system and I never have.'[1319] Yet still, he urged others to bring in the Soviet Union to a collective bloc against aggression.

[1313] Col. 25 13 Apr, 1939. 346 HC Deb 5s.
[1314] 347 Ibid. Col. 1846. 19 May, 1939; Dalton, *Memoirs,* p. 249;
[1315] Diary entry. 7 May, 1939. 1/20/53 . Dalton Papers.
[1316] Col. 1846 19 May, 1939. 347 HC Deb 5s.
[1317] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 296. 8 June, 1939.
[1318] "The New Army" Speech delivered at the Corn Exchange, Cambridge. 19 May, 1939. Cited in R. Churchill, *Into Battle,* pp. 104-110.
[1319] Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters* , p. 394.

The papers of Robert Cecil in 1939 provide another example of just how difficult it was for all members of the political elite to overlook their aversion to the Soviet Union, and yet, the determination of the anti-appeasers to do so. Cecil, like Halifax and many other politicians, was a devout Christian. The papers of Archbishop Lang illustrate the close relationship Cecil had with the church leaders.[1320] In contrast, the Soviet government was anti-religious. A letter to Cecil in April 1939 by Robert MacGregor (President of the Royal Empire Society) exemplified the hostility that many Christians held towards the Soviet Union during this period. 'There is no religious liberty', MacGregor wrote. 'The Russian Government is openly anti-God. How can we expect God's blessing on us if we seek Russia as an ally. It is really ridiculous to ask Russia to defend the liberty of other nations.'[1321] Yet, like Churchill, Cecil was convinced of the need to put aside such feelings. He explained this in a lengthy reply to MacGregor:

> As far as I can see, the Russian peace policy at this moment is identical to ours, and therefore, prima facie, it would appear to be reasonable that we should work together for a common end, however much we may disagree with and disapprove of all other parts of Russian policy. If anything that we were doing could be treated as approval of these parts of Russian policy, then of course I should be strongly against it. But, if not, where are we to draw the line? We are going to collaborate with Turkey; yet the present government of Turkey has committed great crimes and some of their predecessors with whom they are more or less identified have been guilty of some of the most atrocious proceedings in history. Yet I do not imagine that you would say we should refuse Turkish collaboration for peace because of these circumstances.[1322]

MacGregor did not accept Cecil's argument immediately. The series of letters between the two men makes interesting reading, but more importantly, shows

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[1320] For example, see, Letter to Lang from Cecil. 16 April, 1937; Letter to Cecil from Lang. 20 April, 1937. Papers of Gordon Lang. League of Nations: Church of England Policy towards, 1929 - 1939. Lambeth Palace Archives.
[1321] Letter to Cecil from R. MacGregor. 17 Apr, 1939, p. 96. Add 51183. Cecil Papers.
[1322] Letter to MacGregor from Cecil. 19 Apr, 1939, p. 103. Ibid.

the emotional provocation caused by the subject of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. In another letter, MacGregor wrote;

> I...would concentrate on the question, 'Can we expect God's blessing, if we seek an alliance with a Government which is openly 'anti-God', who openly seek to train its people as atheists; who seek to dethrone god - who take away hope of heaven to its people...Whose policy is not confined to its own people but seeks to influence the world thus...all Christians want the blessing of God. I know you sir, are a very sincere and devout Christian...I cannot understand, [why]...hardly anything is said against the terrible Russian Government , seeking at home and abroad to dethrone out loving God & Saviour![1323]

His difficulty in accepting an alliance with a country so 'anti-God' emphasised the strength and conviction Cecil, as an equally devout Christian, must have had to put aside such feelings in his decision to support an alliance. But this was what he chose to do and he explained his pragmatism aptly:

> I still do not see why cooperation with Russia in defence of peace involves any approval of the Russian form of Government. Suppose a ship were sinking and a Russian warship was near, would you suggest that the crew of the sinking ship should not take advantage of the assistance of Russian officers and sailors? I cannot think that you would. But if you did, I am afraid I should have to say that I disagreed with you.[1324]

Whilst an Anglo-French-Soviet military alliance remained unconcluded, therefore, the anti-appeasers continued to criticise and so apply pressure upon the government. Clement Attlee, for example, accused the government of making no 'constructive effort' to secure an agreement."[1325] He and the British public, he said, were 'disturbed by the contrast between the rapidity of the acceptance of onerous obligations by this country and the dilatory methods in seeking collateral security.'[1326] Dalton rightly accused the government of

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[1323] Letter to Cecil from MacGregor. 24 Apr, 1939, p. 111. Ibid.
[1324] Letter to MacGregor from Cecil. 26 Apr, 1939, p. 115. Ibid.
[1325] Cols. 1819 -1825. 19 May,1939. 347 HC Deb 5s.
[1326] Col. 10. 8 May, 1939. Ibid.

deliberately spinning out the negotiations. He complained that

> ...time was spun out, principally by long periods, during which no doubt there were consultations with Paris - one cannot complain of that - but during which the negotiations were kept hanging, sometimes for a fortnight and sometimes longer, between the receipt of the Russian proposal and the sending of the next reply.[1327]

Anthony Eden, too, was concerned that the negotiations were not 'being driven forward with sufficient zest...'[1328]

The reason for the government's failure to secure the collaboration of the Soviets, many believed, remained that which had determined Moscow's exclusion in 1938. Thus the anti-appeasers continued to accuse government ministers of an unwillingness to put aside prejudices against the Soviet Union. Clement Attlee raised the issue of political and ideological prejudices in the House of Commons soon after the announcement of the Polish guarantee. 'I realise', he told the government, '...the difficulties there are in Europe owing to past history and conflicting ideologies, but these things have had to be overcome in the past and in the face of grave dangers.'[1329] In May, he reiterated his conviction that 'a good deal of opposition comes from distrust of the ideology.'[1330] Dalton was equally accusatory in his statements; 'We have had seething assurances from the Prime Minister that ideological differences will not be allowed to interfere with negotiations, yet, there are no indications that there have been any approaches made between London and Moscow.'[1331]

Archibald Sinclair stated his belief that it was the prejudices against the Soviet Union within the government that had 'enormously increased the difficulties of

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[1327] Cols. 2008-2009. 350 Ibid.
[1328] Eden, *The Reckoning*, p. 54.
[1329] Col. 19. 13 Apr, 1939. 346 HC Deb 5s.
[1330] Cols. 1819-1825. 19 May, 1939. 347 Ibid.
[1331] Col. 129. 13 Apr, 1939. 346 Ibid.

reaching agreement with Russia."[1332] He pointed out that the Prime Minister failed to even mention the Soviet Union when talking about the European situation. Furthermore, for 'a year', he said, 'he [Chamberlain] has referred to them [the Soviet Union] as a country "half European and half Asiatic".'[1333] Sinclair emphasised the damaging effect such references and behaviour by the Prime Minister were having in Moscow. Nor, he warned, was this 'the only reference which the Prime Minister has made which has had a bad effect upon opinion in Russia..."[1334] Consequently, he urged the government to make more of an effort to 'dissipate' the 'atmosphere, which has been developed in the relations between Russia and this country...'[1335] A fellow Liberal, Lloyd George, highlighted specifically the government's 'distrust' of Moscow.[1336] Furthermore, he suggested that members of the Cabinet were deliberately ignoring the strengths of the Soviet Union because of their distrust and their personal aversion to collaboration with the Soviets. 'There is a reluctance' he said, 'which I think is a mistake, on the part of people who do not want to know the facts because somehow or other they contravene their theories, to acknowledge the tremendous change that has occurred in Russia, industrially and militarily."[1337] It was, Lloyd George pointed out, quite ironic that London should distrust the Soviets when 'every pact we have entered into since 1931 to deal with a situation like this, we have broken..."[1338] Of greatest importance, however, was that London now 'put these distrusts on one side.' The issues, Lloyd George pleaded, 'were too tremendous..."[1339]

[1332] Col. 1875 .19 May, 1939. 347 Ibid.
[1333] Cols. 24-25. 13 Apr,1939. 346 Ibid.
[1334] Ibid.
[1335] Col. 25 . Ibid.
[1336] Cols. 1818-24. 19 May, 1939. 347 Ibid.
[1337] Col. 1818. Ibid.
[1338] Cols. 1818-24. Ibid.
[1339] Ibid.

Winston Churchill agreed. He implored the government once again to overlook its suspicion of Soviet intentions and instead approach the negotiations with pragmatism. 'When you come to examine...the interest and loyalty of the Russian Government in this matter', he said, 'you must not be guided by sentiment. You must be guided by a study of the interests involved."[1340] He reiterated the need to overlook personal prejudices at an address at the Cambridge Corn Exchange:

> We must not at this juncture do anything which encourages these Dictators to suppose that we are not ready with other like-minded countries to go to all lengths in doing our share of common duty. I have heard that a very high functionary in Berlin said Herr Hitler: "You will know that Britain is in earnest on the day when the British working classes accept conscription, and the Conservative party agree to an alliance with Russia." If we wish for peace, of failing peace, victory, surely we ought to have both? This is a time when prejudices must abandoned on either side, and a true comradeship established.[1341]

Following his decision to speak openly about his support of an alliance, Eden, too, stressed the need to overlook prejudices. In particular he spoke about the hostility towards the Soviet system of government and the distrust of Soviet intentions. 'I have no desire to enter into arguments as to the merits or otherwise of the methods of the government employed in Russia...', he stated in the House of Commons, '...nor is it indeed necessary or relevant to the decision we have to take."[1342] 'Lots of people in this country have the idea that dictatorships should not be touched with a barge pole', Eden explained, but, he continued,

> ...we have to remember that all the countries that we have guaranteed are dictatorships. We have departed from the old idea of a front of democratic powers against dictators...We are now building up something like a common peace front of all people without regard to

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[1340] Cols. 1841-42. Ibid.
[1341] "The New Army" Speech delivered at the Corn Exchange, Cambridge. 19 May, 1939. Cited in R. Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 104-110.
[1342] Col. 1855-6. 19 May, 1939. 347 HC Deb 5s.

their form of Government.[1343]

Regarding suspicions of Soviet intentions, Eden told the Commons at the end of July that he understood the 'long legacy of suspicion' which was 'by no means easily removed."[1344] Nevertheless, it *could* be overlooked, and this is what Eden and others continued to impress upon the government until the breakdown of negotiations in August.

The frustration and anxiety of those who realised the need for an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance had resulted in constant attacks upon the British government throughout March-May. However, this did not necessarily mean that those outside of the government believed every Cabinet member was equally guilty for the failure of negotiations. Hugh Dalton was certain, for example, that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were primarily to blame.[1345] Halifax and Hoare, he believed, had actually been in favour of an alliance for some time. Dalton noted of his meeting with Maisky: 'I tell him I learn that Hoare is and has been for a long time, very sound on Russia. It is a mistake to put him in the same group with P.M. and Simon. Halifax, likewise, understands the position well."[1346] Admittedly, there appears little evidence in the official papers to support such a negative portrayal of the Chancellor of Exchequer. But, apart from this, it would be fair to say that the anti-appeasers had a surprisingly accurate appreciation of the attitudes that existed within the cabinet, particularly with regard to Neville Chamberlain.

One reason individuals such as Chamberlain rejected Soviet proposals of an alliance during 1939 was their unwillingness to put aside their suspicion of Soviet foreign policy intentions. Indeed, following Molotov's proposal of a

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[1343] Ibid.
[1344] Cols. 2035-6. 31 July, 1939. 350 Ibid.
[1345] Diary entry. 3 May, 1939. 1/20/50; 7 May, 1939. 1/20/53 ;28 May, 1939. 1/20/43. Dalton Papers.
[1346] Diary entry. 3 May, 1939. 1/20/50. Ibid.

guarantee concerning the Baltic States and his insistence upon a Soviet definition of indirect aggression, all of those involved in the foreign policy decision making process, including Halifax, began increasingly to allow their distrust to once again dominate their attitudes towards collaboration with the Soviets. In contrast, the anti-appeasers continued in their support of an alliance. Only Churchill, Lloyd George, and Hugh Dalton spoke specifically of the proposal in the House of Commons, and even defended Moscow's clause of indirect aggression. However, others, aware of the terms proposed, did continue to call upon the government to secure Soviet collaboration.[1347] Hugh Dalton told the House of Commons, for example, that the Soviet government was entitled to take such steps to ensure its security. Moscow was, he said,

> ...perfectly right to keep their weather eye on Estonia and Latvia and perfectly right, if a watertight treaty is to be constructed between us and them, to get some safeguard for immediate and swift action to prevent the flowering of any nasty little bud of indirect aggression.[1348]

Dalton pointed out that Moscow's concern about the Baltic States was no less important than, for example, Britain's concern about the Low Countries.[1349] Lloyd George, similarly, explained what he perceived to be Moscow's justified request for equality in the terms of an alliance: 'Russia is only asking for exactly the same terms...She will come in whole heartedly, with the whole of her tremendous force provided we say that France, ourselves and Russia shall be in on exactly the same terms.'[1350] Winston Churchill, who also continued to support 'a full and solid alliance...with Russia'[1351] , pointed out that Molotov's most recent demand made little difference to Britain's position, and in the event of war, the security of Britain was of foremost importance. In a speech given on 28 June at the Carlton Club, Churchill explained:

[1347] Thompson, *Anti Appeasers*, p. 214.
[1348] Col. 2011. 31 July, 1939. 350 HC Deb 5s.
[1349] Diary entry. 28 June, 1939. 1/20/43 ; Ibid. 1/20/74. Dalton Papers.
[1350] Col. 2084. 31 July, 1939. 350 HC Deb 5s.
[1351] Lord Camrose to Winston S. Churchill (Churchill Papers: 8/628) 30 June, 1939. Cited in Gilbert, *Churchill,* p. 1540 (nb. 1).

We all hope that a full and solid alliance will be made with Russia without further delay. It would seem that the Russian claim that we should all stand together in resisting an act of aggression upon the Baltic States was just and reasonable, and I trust we shall meet in the fullest manner. Frankly I don't understand what we have been boggling at all these weeks. At the point to which we have come, these additional guarantees do not add much to our danger compared to what will be gained in collective security by an alliance between England, France and Russia.[1352]

Anthony Eden was so eager to see a successful conclusion of the negotiations, even after the Soviet government's new demand, that he volunteered to go to Moscow himself to continue negotiations when William Seeds fell ill with flu.[1353] He informed Halifax that Stalin would expect at least the same consideration afforded Mussolini when Halifax and Chamberlain had visited Rome, in January.[1354] As a result of his earlier visit to Moscow in 1935, Eden believed his representation of the government would prove more effective. He told an audience in Warwick 'an hour's talk between principals may be worth a month of writing."[1355] Later, he said he 'felt the issue to be so critical and weight in the scales of peace and war that the risks had to be taken..."[1356] Concerning the Soviet proposal of a guarantee against indirect aggression towards the Baltic States, Eden believed London 'could have got better terms...had we not been so hesitant in the early stages.' He was not completely comfortable with the new terms, yet accepted them.[1357]

Lord Cecil also remained supportive, expressing his belief at the end of June

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[1352] 'Three months of Tension.' An Address to the City Carlton Club, London, 28 June, 1939. Cited in Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 112-119.
[1353] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 295. 5 June, 1939.
[1354] Eden, *The Reckoning*, p. 55; Churchill, *World War*, p. 155.
[1355] Yorkshire Post. 12 June, 1939. Reporting Eden's speech at Grove Park, Warwick. Cited in Dutton, *Eden*, p. 136.
[1356] Eden, *The Reckoning*, p. 55.
[1357] Eden to Cranbourne 27 June, 1939. AP 14/2/27A. Eden Papers. Cited in Dutton, p. 136.

that 'immediate completion of agreement with the Soviet Union is essential for peace.'[1358] Archibald Sinclair told the House of Commons at the end of July; 'For my own part I have always been and am still hopeful that an agreement will be reached with Russia.'[1359] He pressed the government to send a 'man of the highest standing in the country' to the 'political and staff talks' to be held in Moscow in August.[1360]

The anti-appeasers were neither blindly pro-Soviet nor entirely anti-government during the negotiations. Their primary interest remained simply to see the conclusion of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. Consequently, where necessary, they were also prepared to criticise the Soviet government. Earlier in the year, for example, Dalton had told Maisky that he felt both the Soviet and British governments were to blame for the failure to secure an agreement regarding the guarantee of Rumania.[1361] Once again, in July, Dalton was not willing to overlook Moscow's faults and responsibility in the hindrance of negotiations. He chastised Maisky for what he believed to be Moscow's unjustifiable objection to British demands for a guarantee of the Low Countries:

> I say that the argument of his General Staff is sheer tripe...Either, I say, there will be a war in which the SU is not engaged, or not...I warn him that there will be a good deal of criticism of the Russians for delaying the conclusion of the Pact, even though they may seem to themselves to have good arguments. But so will British ministers if they stress the similarity between Russia's interest in the Baltic States, which we are now prepared to recognise and British and French interest in the Low Countries and Switzerland.[1362]

By July , 1939, Moscow's difficult behaviour did pose a genuine dilemma for the

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[1358] Telegram from Cecil. 29 June, 1939, p. 169. Add 51183. Cecil Papers.
[1359] Col. 1995 31 July, 1939. 350 HC Deb 5s.
[1360] Ibid; Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador, had made it clear that the Soviet government desired a senior individual such as General Gort (Chief of the British General Staff) to lead the British staff mission. Cited in Maisky, *Who Helped Hitler*, p. 164.
[1361] Diary entry. 12 Apr, 1939.1/20/37. Dalton Papers.
[1362] Diary entry. 4 July, 1939. 1/21/1. Ibid.

Labour party. 'Either we press the Government or not', Dalton wrote.

> In the first case, we may encourage the Russians to be more difficult and be represented by ministers here as impeding negotiations...In other cases, we are taken to be acquiescing in HMG's conduct of the negotiations and make our supporters in the country impatient.[1363]

A large number of Labour members were beginning to see the Soviet government as being 'pernickety.'[1364] Oliver Harvey, similarly, did not appreciate what he perceived to be Moscow 'getting more and more difficult and elusive.'[1365] Yet, the 'proper mess' that was the negotiations, he noted, was 'chiefly owing to the slowness and reluctance with which we first tackled Soviet Russia.'[1366] The British government remained thought of as the main culprit in the failure to conclude an agreement.

Consequently, the British government continued to be criticised for what the anti-appeasers perceived to be detrimental decisions or inaction. Dalton, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, for example, criticised the decision to send the Foreign Office official William Strang to assist William Seeds in the negotiations in June. Strang was 'able and devoted', Dalton acknowledged, but he was 'not exactly the opposite number of M. Molotov.'[1367] 'Russians are not less proud than the people of other countries', he pointed out. In his mind, the decision had been a deliberate show of disrespect by the Prime Minister. It was 'a little *infra dig* for M. Molotov to have been left to talk for weeks with Mr Strang."[1368] Either Halifax or Anthony Eden should have been sent.[1369] Hence, Dalton urged the Prime Minister in the House of Commons to dispatch a senior minister.[1370] Only

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[1363] Ibid.
[1364] Diary entry. 10 July, 1939. Ibid.
[1365] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* pp. 302-303. 9 July, 1939.
[1366] Ibid., p. 301. 1 July, 1939.
[1367] Dalton, *Memoirs,* p. 255.
[1368] Col. 2112. 31 July, 1939. 350 HC Deb 5s.
[1369] Dalton, *Memoirs,* p. 255.
[1370] Ibid; Col. 5. 26 June, 1939. 349 HC Deb 5s.

this, he believed, could help remove the atmosphere of distrust and misunderstanding and so 'ease the next stages' and ensure the conclusion of an alliance.[1371] Lloyd George, too, termed the decision an 'insult' to the Soviet government.[1372] Churchill told the government that the sending of what he perceived to be 'so subordinate a figure...gave actual offence' to the Soviet government.[1373] 'The difficulties of negotiation between London and Moscow' were, according to Oliver Harvey, 'obvious - no plenipotentiaries.'[1374]

During the year, several politicians had highlighted such a belief that the British government was not treating the Soviet government with the diplomatic respect deserved of an equal power in the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations. In April, for example, Dalton told the government that he and others 'find almost inexplicable the continual reluctance of the Government, not merely to conduct negotiations with Russia, but even to pay such conventional tributes or make such friendly observations as are commonplace in international relations.'[1375] In May, Sinclair warned the government against treating 'her as a convenience, as a country we can call into help us when we and the countries whose welfare and independence we are most concerned are in danger.'[1376] Instead he urged the need to 'treat her as an equal partner in resistance to aggression...' This involved including the Soviet government in diplomatic as well as military affairs: '...if we welcome her soldiers to the battlefield we must not, as we did at Munich, exclude her statesmen from the council chamber.'[1377] Lloyd George accused the government of 'political snobbery' and asked; 'What is the good of this political snobbery that wants only to help a proletariat government provided you do not

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[1371] Diary entry. 11 July, 1939. 1/21/8. Dalton Papers.
[1372] Col. 2084. 31 July, 1939. 350 HC Deb 5s.
[1373] Churchill, *World War,* p. 155.
[1374] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries,* p. 295. 5 June, 1939.
[1375] Col. 126. 13 Apr, 1939. 346 HC Deb 5s.
[1376] Cols. 1874-75 19 May, 1939. 347 Ibid.
[1377] Ibid.

rub shoulders with it?'[1378] Such accusations, but particularly Lloyd George's identification of 'political snobbery', accurately evaluated the attitude of Chamberlain and several others towards the Soviet Union during the 1939 negotiations. Throughout, official records and private papers show that the Prime Minister especially believed Moscow ought to be grateful for any recognition given by London. The government's behaviour, delaying its replies, for example, reflected this. One could argue that such sentiments were not important to the development of the negotiations, that the Soviet leader was not interested in what the British thought of his government, but instead was concerned only with what, militarily, the British and French could offer. But to take such a view would ignore the fact that Stalin was not only paranoid, but also very proud. It is difficult to believe that such obvious contempt would not have had an effect upon the dictator's attitude towards the West. The anti-appeasers certainly believed this. They, on the other hand, appreciated the reality of the Soviet Union's military and political potential.

In addition, and importantly, the anti-appeasers continued to trust Soviet intentions during 1939. Whatever their personal views of the Soviet system and its ideology, individuals such as Churchill, Cecil, Boothby and Eden stressed the mutual interests of both Britain and the Soviet Union during this period. Unlike most within the Cabinet and the Foreign Policy Committee, for whom distrust of Moscow was ultimately impossible to overcome, the anti-appeasers sincerely believed the Soviet government, as far as the resistance of aggression was concerned, could be relied upon. Robert Boothby, who had believed Moscow's declared foreign policy intentions during the Czechoslovakian crisis, continued to defend Moscow in the Daily Telegraph during 1939. On 14 March, for example, Boothby wrote an article which explained, in detail, what he believed

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[1378] Cols.1818-24. Ibid.

to be the peaceful nature of Soviet foreign policy as announced by Stalin in a speech to the Soviet congress on 10 March. This speech had evoked much criticism and suspicion within the Foreign Office and Cabinet because of its attacks upon British foreign policy. Later, historians pointed to the speech as being indicative of Soviet insincerity in the forthcoming negotiations.[1379] Yet, Boothby defended Stalin's speech and intentions, writing:

> Mr Stalin's recent speech to the Congress of Soviets has not received the publicity in this country which it deserves. It contained, perhaps inevitably, some unflattering references to the Western Democracies. But he laid down a concrete foreign policy which is of considerable intrinsic importance at the present time. It was based on the following four points:
> [1] Peace and the strengthening of business like relations with all countries.
> [2] Close and neighbourly relations with all countries which have a common frontier with the USSR.
> [3] Support for nations which are the victims of aggression.
> [4] Retaliation against any instigator of war who might attempt to infringe the integrity of the Soviet borders.[1380]

Interestingly, in his memoirs, Anthony Eden appeared to doubt Soviet sincerity during the negotiations and claimed, as several historians have done, that the Polish guarantee effectively protected the Soviet Union and therefore undermined the value of an alliance for Moscow:

> ...the British and French bargaining position had been weakened. In every sense we scarcely carried the guns. Hitler could offer Russia at least temporary peace, while if Stalin came to terms with us, he must expect that the Führer might at any moment direct his vengeful fury eastwards.[1381]

Of course, Eden's memoirs were written after the war and during a period of hostility between the West and the Soviet Union. During the negotiations in

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[1379] Roberts, *Soviet Union*, p. 66.
[1380] Letter to *Daily Telegraph* 14 Mar, 1939. G/3/13/9. Lloyd George Papers.
[1381] Eden, *The Reckoning*, pp. 55-56.

1939, he repeatedly expressed not only his support of an alliance after the announcement of the Polish guarantee, but also his belief that Moscow ought to be trusted. He told the House of Commons in May that he had 'never been able to see any reason why,..., the relations of this country...and the Soviet Government should come into conflict.' He explained;

> If there is one country that has surely got plenty to do at home, that country is Russia. One glance at the map is sufficient to show how immense are her territories, and to travel any part of Russia's great distances reinforces that conviction, that no country in the world has a greater need for peace.[1382]

Thus, whilst Chamberlain believed Stalin's aim was to provoke war and then abandon Britain to fight Germany and Japan, Eden could imagine 'no country which has less to gain from war.'[1383] Even by the end of July, Eden still believed that there was 'no-where on the earth's surface any reason why these interests [the interests of Britain and the Soviet Union] should conflict.'[1384] Oliver Harvey similarly noted the possible security the Soviets had gained from the British guarantees to Poland and Rumanian. In addition, by the end of June, he believed 'the forthcomingness of the Germans (who are working in Moscow very hard) are having their effect, and they are losing interest.' Yet, he stressed, that there still remained 'little doubt that the Soviets want agreement.'[1385]

Churchill and Dalton, amongst others, stressed the mutual fear both Britain and the Soviet Union had of Germany. In a speech given in the House of Commons as early as April Churchill argued that the Soviet government were terrified of Nazi Germany going eastwards, and it was upon 'that deep, natural, legitimate

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[1382] Col. 1855-6. 19 May, 1939. 347 HC Deb 5s.
[1383] Ibid.
[1384] Cols. 2035-6. 31 July, 1939. 350 Ibid.
[1385] Harvey, *Diplomatic Diaries*, p. 299. 24 June, 1939.

interest...' which the British government could rely on to secure an alliance.'[1386] Dalton pointed out the threat facing the Soviet Union from the East also.[1387] Thus, despite the Polish guarantee, the cessation of anti-Soviet propaganda in Germany and all the numerous factors pointed out by politicians, and later historians, as evidence of Moscow's insincerity in 1939, the anti-appeasers could still appreciate that, in fact, the Soviet Union remained a potential victim. That Chamberlain and his ministers could, and ultimately would, not realise this, led to the breakdown of negotiations.

Winston Churchill articulated the thoughts of all the anti-appeasers when he wrote that the Soviet - German non-aggression pact marked 'the culminating failure of British...foreign policy and diplomacy.'[1388] Throughout 1939, the anti-appeasers proved that any chance of securing a Soviet ally was lost due to the unwillingness of certain ministers to put aside their anti Soviet prejudices during the foreign policy decision making process. They did this in two ways. Firstly, through their own continued support for an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. Secondly, through the nature of their criticism levied at the British government. Thus, despite continuing to hold, and even voice, their own negative views of the Soviet Union, the anti-appeasers maintained their support for Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration and by May had unified in an explicit demand for an alliance. Even after Molotov's demand for a clause of indirect aggression, the anti-appeasers continued to openly support the conclusion of an alliance. Some, most notably Churchill, Dalton and Lloyd George, even defended Moscow's justification in making such demands. The Soviet government's faults were acknowledged, but Soviet potential either to preserve

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[1386] Brabazon to Winston Churchill 13 Apr, 1939. Cited in, Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 1448; 'The Invasion of Albania. 13 Apr, 1939.' A Speech delivered in the House of Commons. 13 Apr, 1939. Cited in Churchill, *Into Battle*, pp. 89-94.
[1387] Cols. 127-8 13 Apr, 1939. 346 HC Deb 5s.
[1388] Churchill, *World War*, p. 157.

peace or resist aggression in the event of war, had not changed, and this overshadowed all other considerations. Indeed, as a result of Chamberlain's guarantees at the beginning of the year, securing Soviet aid had become even more necessary. With Hitler's aggressive ambitions now obvious and mounting concern about Moscow's suspicion of western sincerity, war without a Soviet ally appeared increasingly likely. Consequently, political excuses put forward by the government, especially regarding Polish opposition, were revealed to be just that. Despite acknowledging the differences of opinion within the Cabinet and what appeared to be an acceptance of Soviet proposals at the end of May, the politicians looked at in this chapter openly blamed the failure to secure a Soviet ally upon the unwillingness of the decision makers to put aside ideological distrust and political hostility, and they were right to do so.

Conclusion.

Throughout Chamberlain's premiership the Foreign Office provided the British political elite with detailed and insightful information about different aspects of the Soviet Union. They were told that political directives dominated everything. In his determination to ensure absolute control, Stalin had ordered the murder of an untold number of his own citizens in the purges. In addition to the immense suffering of the Soviet people, politically oppressed and living in substandard conditions, the apparently indiscriminate purges undermined any industrial or agricultural progress. Moreover, each of the armed forces had been significantly weakened. The higher ranks of the military were continuing to be purged. Their replacements were politically loyal yet inexperienced. Furthermore, the equipment needed for fighting in all three services was in poor condition. The Red Army was capable of fighting an effective defensive war, and all three attachés agreed that the Soviet Union would still *appear* to others to be a formidable opponent. Added to this, from 1938 onwards, the attachés acknowledged that the Soviet Union was preparing for war, and would, sometime in the future, become an influential power. Hence, the wholly negative portrayals of the Soviet Union by certain individuals were not entirely substantiated by the facts. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that politicians and officials in London had received enough information to support their aversion to the Soviet government.

Interestingly, therefore, it was *not* this information that provoked opposition towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration amongst ministers. All members of the British political elite spoke of their disgust at the internal policies of the Soviet government. But those who opposed Anglo-Soviet collaboration never explained their opposition in terms of their horror at the suffering of the Soviet citizens. Ministers did, on several occasions, highlight Soviet military weakness

when explaining their rejection of Soviet proposals. But it was not the poor condition of the Soviet armed forces that ultimately decided attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration. Two points support this assertion. Firstly, ministers did consider and later agree to, military collaboration with the Soviets, despite the fact that such apparent weaknesses still existed. Indeed, the consideration given to military collaboration in September 1938 and the acceptance of an alliance in May 1939 proves that none of the alleged structural constraints highlighted by those who opposed Anglo-Soviet collaboration were in fact the insurmountable obstacles they were portrayed to be. Secondly, ministers, indeed Chamberlain himself, admitted that Soviet military weakness was only of secondary importance. Of primary importance was anti-Soviet prejudice, namely ideological hostility and distrust.

Ministers had a *choice* during this period. They could *choose* whether to ally with the Soviet Union or not. What influenced their decision, indeed what determined the attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration amongst all members of the British political elite, was whether they were willing to put aside the anti-Soviet prejudice that each held. Politicians and ministers themselves identified the distinction between *changing* and *putting aside* their distrust, and several acknowledged the influence of such a decision on their views of Anglo-Soviet collaboration. Moreover, the crucial influence of *putting aside* one's anti-Soviet prejudice upon attitudes towards collaboration was shown by the fact that perceptions of the Soviet Union amongst individuals from all parties remained relatively similar, whilst their opinions of collaboration differed, and for some, altered over time.

There were differences in the degree of the hostility and suspicion held by various politicians. Clement Attlee's attitudes towards the Soviet Union were not, for example, as extreme as those of Winston Churchill. Nevertheless,

between 1937 - 1939, similar views of the Soviet Union were held by all of the government ministers, military experts, Foreign Office officials, and anti-appeasers looked at in this thesis. All opposed Stalin's totalitarian system of government and were horrified by its consequences for the Soviet economy, armed forces, and the Soviet people. More importantly, however, they shared a deep distrust of the Soviet government. They mistrusted Soviet foreign policy intentions and were suspicious of its reliability as a potential ally. Ideological prejudice was at the root of such distrust. All politicians and officials were ideologically opposed to Soviet Communism and many perceived it to be a formidable threat to the stability of Britain and Europe. Moscow's primary aim was still perceived to be Communist expansionism. The efforts of the Comintern to undermine the democracies during the 1920s still evoked resentment during Chamberlain's premiership. Indeed, much of the resentment and mistrust between 1937 - 1939 arose as a result of the decisions and actions of the Soviet government throughout the previous two decades. When the Soviets proposed collaboration to resist future German aggression in 1938, the response of ministers and politicians was decided by whether they were willing to overlook this ideological distrust.

The anti - appeasers, including a number of officials within the Foreign Office, namely Laurence Collier and Robert Vansittart, argued against the diplomatic exclusion of the Soviet Union. It is unclear what form of Anglo -Soviet collaboration these individuals supported before Munich, but they all wanted the Soviet government involved in efforts to preserve peace. Winston Churchill and Robert Boothby called specifically for an *alliance* with the French and Soviets. Support for their position increased during the winter of 1938 - 1939, and, with the exception of Laurence Collier who remained vague about what form of collaboration he supported, by May 1939, nearly all of the anti-appeasers were unified in their calls for an Anglo-French-Soviet mutual

alliance. The support for a mutual alliance amongst the majority of these politicians and officials, however, remained, even after Molotov's demand for a clause of indirect aggression. Only Churchill, Hugh Dalton and Lloyd George, spoke out in defence of the demand. Others, such as Eden, clearly regretted the demand. However, neither Churchill, Dalton, Lloyd George, Eden, nor any other 'anti-appeaser' now rejected the need for an alliance.

The key to the support for an alliance amongst the anti-appeasers and several Foreign Office personnel was that each had a greater fear than Communist expansionism, and this fear persuaded them to *overlook* the anti - Soviet prejudice each held. What the anti-appeasers feared more than Communism was Britain being left to face an aggressive Germany without a Soviet ally. All of the anti-appeasers examined in this thesis, together with Vansittart and Collier, foresaw quite how serious Hitler's aggressive ambitions were, and implacably opposed the repeated concessions being made by London to appease Hitler and Mussolini. Inextricably linked to their realisation of the threat posed by Germany was the belief that Britain *needed* the Soviet Union as an ally. Dissident Conservatives, members of the Labour party, Liberals and certain foreign office personnel acknowledged Soviet military potential and its strategic significance. They knew that Britain needed the Soviet Union and the threat of its potential, either to preserve peace or to resist German aggression in the event of war. In this context, their perceptions of *Germany*, *appeasement policy and Soviet potential* were important influences upon their attitudes towards Anglo-Soviet collaboration. But these perceptions were not *direct* influences. The key determining factor as to whether politicians and officials supported collaboration with the Soviets, was whether they were willing to overlook their anti-Soviet prejudice. Perceptions of Soviet potential and of Germany were *indirectly* influential in that they effected whether one decided to overlook such prejudice or not.

Thus, for members of the Cabinet, Foreign Policy Committee and the Chiefs of Staff, who supported appeasement policy and whose views of Hitler also differed from those of the anti-appeasers, there was, during the months before Munich, no reason for them to overlook the ideological distrust many admitted dictated their opposition to Anglo-Soviet collaboration. Soviet proposals of cooperation to resist future German aggression were rejected.Hitler's aggressive and uncompromising behaviour over the Czech crisis, together with a genuine belief in the inevitability of war at the end of September, however, forced most in the Cabinet to overlook their prejudice at the end of September to the extent that they were, if only momentarily, willing to collaborate with the Soviets to resist aggression. The distrust and hostility amongst ministers and officials had not yet been overlooked completely. Thus, no political agreement was signed with the Soviets following Munich. Yet, the events of September, and following this, the takeover of Bohemia and Moravia in March, induced a shift in attitudes towards Germany. This, consequently, began to influence the extent to which ministers allowed their anti-Soviet prejudice to dictate foreign policy towards the Soviet Union. Thus, Halifax began to work to improve Anglo-Soviet relations, and, by the end of March 1939, several ministers and the Chiefs of Staff actually spoke out in favour of Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration.

These individuals, and in particular the Chiefs of Staff, now began, like the anti-appeasers, Vansittart, and Collier, to appreciate the key position that the Soviet Union held. But changing views of Nazi Germany and an appreciation of Moscow's influence were not the most persuasive considerations for the military experts and those in government during 1939. More important was the fear of a German - Soviet rapprochement. Notably, amongst the anti-appeasers only Anthony Eden and Oliver Harvey appeared concerned by rumours of a rapprochement between Berlin and Moscow. Concern was much more

widespread amongst those involved in the foreign policy decision making process. Indeed, when ministers were finally convinced of the possibility of a rapprochement in May, the majority were prepared to overlook their anti-Soviet prejudice completely, enough, in fact, to accept a mutual alliance.

The exception in the Cabinet throughout was Neville Chamberlain. His views of Germany and hope of coming to an agreement with Hitler did not change significantly. Moreover, he refused to accept the possibility of a German - Soviet rapprochement. Consequently, and as his private writings show, he was never willing to suppress his personal hostility towards and distrust of the Soviet government, even when he *appeared* to agree to an alliance. Those that shared Chamberlain's aversion to collaboration, namely W. S. Morrison and Butler in the Foreign Policy Committee, and officials such as Hadow, Halford, Sargent and Lascelles in the Foreign Office, also rejected rumours of a German - Soviet rapprochement, and continued to allow their historical and ideological suspicion of Moscow to dictate their opinions of an alliance.

But Chamberlain needed the support of his Cabinet. As a result, when Molotov demanded, and then refused to compromise on a guarantee against indirect aggression, the Prime Minister seized the opportunity to evoke once more the suspicion and resentment ministers had only managed to suppress completely only a few weeks earlier. With the exception of Oliver Stanley and the Chiefs of Staff, Chamberlain succeeded in evoking such suspicion of the Soviet government from his ministers because those in the Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee who had supported an alliance had only done so because it appeared the lesser of two evils, the other being some form of collaboration between Berlin and Moscow. The Soviet government's demands from June onwards, however, seemed to confirm the prejudice that had never disappeared from the conscience of individuals, and an alliance no longer seemed the lesser evil.

Communist expansionism again appeared to be Europe's greatest threat. Gradually, suspicion reappeared and once more dictated the foreign policy decision making process regarding the Soviet Union.

An examination of the evidence during this period shows clearly that the subject of Anglo-Soviet collaboration was a difficult one for anti-appeasers, civil servants and those in the government. It was a real struggle to suppress an almost inherent prejudice against the Soviet Union, and there appeared many reasons not to speak out in favour of closer Anglo-Soviet relations. The decisions and behaviour of the Kremlin itself continually undermined any support for collaboration. Reports from Moscow throughout Chamberlain's premiership, for example, highlighted the devastation inflicted by the purges upon the Soviet Union's economy, and, more importantly, its armed forces. Furthermore, during the latter weeks of the 1939 negotiations, Soviet representatives were perceived to be difficult and increasingly uncompromising. There were also issues such as political loyalty which individuals found difficult to overcome. It is not surprising, therefore, that of the individuals studied in this thesis, many made contradictory and sometimes confusing statements about their attitude towards Anglo-French-Soviet collaboration.

Nevertheless, ministers, officials, and anti appeasers did have a choice and it is significant that on two occasions, the majority of Cabinet and Foreign Policy Committee considered and later agreed to an alliance with the Soviets. Indeed, it is precisely because these ministers and officials twice chose to overlook prejudice and accept the need to collaborate with the Soviets that it is inaccurate to *wholly* condemn the *entire* British government for the failure to secure a Soviet ally. Despite its critical approach, the aim of this thesis is not to condemn the British government. Rather, it is the contention of this thesis that if foreign policy decisions had been made by others in the Cabinet including

Hoare, Stanley, or even Chatfield and Halifax, an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance would have been concluded at the end of May.

This alliance was not concluded because Neville Chamberlain deliberately sabotaged the opportunity by underpinning the British proposal for a mutual alliance at the end of May upon article 16 of the League Covenant, thereby confirming Moscow's suspicion of Western sincerity. Though crucial to the failure of the negotiations, this decision by Chamberlain was just one example of his determination to prevent a British commitment to the Soviet Union. Throughout 1938-1939, Neville Chamberlain deliberately exploited his position and power as Prime Minister to stop others overlooking their anti-Soviet prejudice, and to prevent the acceptance of Soviet proposals. Thus, he concealed important military evidence, deliberately misinformed his Cabinet and the Foreign Policy Committee, and took decisions detrimental to Anglo-Soviet relations without consulting others.

Was Chamberlain therefore ultimately responsible for Britain's failure to secure a Soviet ally? Although this thesis is not an examination of Anglo-French-Soviet relations, it is necessary at this point to reflect briefly on the responsibilities of the French and the Soviets in the failure of the negotiations. The French government, for example, was also guilty of allowing its own anti-Soviet prejudice to dictate its foreign policy towards the Soviet Union. During 1939, Paris was unwise to allow the British to represent and, for most of the time, dictate, the position of the allies in the negotiations. But the French government needed a British ally. Moreover, and unlike London, Paris agreed to an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance in April, and thereafter continued to press for the acceptance of Soviet proposals. Throughout the final weeks of the negotiations, and especially during the military negotiations in Moscow, the French decisions reflected a government that had put aside its ideological hostility completely,

and genuinely desired an Anglo-French-Soviet mutual alliance. Paris, therefore, cannot be held equally responsible for the failure of negotiations.

Neither can the Soviets be held equally responsible for the failure to secure an alliance. As mentioned above, the Kremlin took decisions with regard to its internal policies during the period of Chamberlain's premiership that undermined its foreign policy aims of securing collaboration with the West . Its demands and behaviour, especially during 1939, understandably evoked resentment and distrust in the West. Soviet representatives were difficult and politicians suspected Moscow wanted to invade independent countries in the Baltic. Indeed, Moscow did want to take over the Baltic States in the event of war. But the Soviet government had throughout Chamberlain's premiership genuinely desired an alliance with the French and British. Its hostility and demands increased because of evidence of British insincerity. The Soviet Union needed to ensure its security in the event of war, especially if, as seemed possible, the West encouraged German forces eastwards. The most important point, as far as Britain and France should have been concerned, was that Moscow , until August, sincerely worked to conclude an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance in the hope of resisting German aggression.

Britain was responsible for the failure to secure a Soviet ally. Ministers and officials were at fault because of their unwillingness, for so long, to overlook their distrust of the Soviet Union to the extent that they could accept Soviet proposals. They finally agreed to a mutual alliance in May 1939, but with the exception of Stanley and the Chiefs of Staff, all then *chose* to allow their prejudice to dictate once more the foreign policy decision making process regarding the Soviet Union during the last weeks of the negotiations. Nevertheless, it was Neville Chamberlain, alone, who *consistently* refused to suppress his own intense ideological suspicion and resentment. Only he

repeatedly rejected Soviet proposals. Consequently, it was ultimately Neville Chamberlain who drove away the one ally who could have made a significant difference to Britain's experience of war.

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Interviews

Dr. Andrei Y. Sidorov. Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and Russian foreign policy, Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Date: 6. 02. 01.

Appendix

Appendix I; List of British politicians and officials. (May 1937 - August 1939).

Cabinet

Ernst Brown	Minister of Labour
Leslie Burgin	Minister of Transport Minister of Supply (From Apr, 1939)
Neville Chamberlain	Prime Minister
Duff Cooper	First Lord of the Admiralty (May, 1937- Oct, 1938)
Walter Elliot	Secretary for Scotland Minister for Health (From May , 1938)
Lord Hailsham	Lord Chancellor Lord President of the Council (Feb - Oct, 1938)
Lord Edward Frederick Halifax	Lord President of the Council Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (From Feb, 1938)
Maurice Hankey	Secretary to the Cabinet
Sir Samuel Hoare	Secretary of State for Home Affairs
Leslie Hore Belisha	Secretary of State for War
Sir Thomas Inskip	Minister for Coordination of Defence Secretary of State for Dominions (From Jan, 1939)
Malcolm MacDonald	Secretary of State for Dominions Secretary of State for Colonies (From Jan, 1939)

William S. Morrison	President of Board for Agriculture Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (From Jan, 1939)
W. Ormsby-Gore	Secretary of State for Colonies
Sir John Simon	Chancellor of the Exchequer
Lord James R. Stanhope	President of Board of Education First Lord of the Admiralty (From Oct, 1938)
Oliver Stanley	President of the Board of Trade
Lord Swinton	Secretary of State for Air
Lord Herbrand de la Warr	Lord Privy Seal President of Board of Education (From Oct, 1938)
Kingsley Wood	Minister for Health Secretary of State for Air (From May, 1938)
Marquis of Zetland (Lawrence J. L. Dundas)	Secretary of State for India

(Lord Alfred Ernle Chatfield joined the Cabinet as Minister for Coordination of Defence from January, 1939).

Foreign Office

Richard Austin Butler	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1938 - 40)
Sir Alexander Cadogan	Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1936-38) Permanent Under Secretary, Foreign Office (1938 - 1946)
Henry Channon	Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

Viscount A. A. Chilston	British Ambassador to Soviet Union (1933 - 1938)
Captain Clanchy	British Royal Naval attaché in Moscow
Laurence Collier	Head of the Northern Department, Foreign Office
Paul Falla	Junior Official in the Northern Department, Foreign Office
Captain Firebrace	British military attaché in Moscow
Ashton Gwatkin	Economic Adviser to the Foreign Office
Robert Hadow	Junior Official in the Northern Department, Foreign Office
Aubrey Halford	Junior Official in the Northern Department, Foreign Office
Captain Hallawell	British airforce attaché in Moscow
Oliver Harvey	Foreign Secretary's Private Secretary
Sir Nevile Henderson	British Ambassador to Germany
R. Howe	Junior Official in the Northern Department, Foreign Office
Gladwyn Jebb	Private Secretary to the Permanent Under Secretary, Foreign Office
Sir William Kennard	British Ambassador to Poland
Daniel William Lascelles	First Secretary in the Northern Department, Foreign Office
Reginald Leeper	Head of the News Department, Foreign Office
Mason MacFarlane	Britain's military attaché in Berlin
Fitzroy Maclean	Third Secretary in the British Embassy (Moscow)
Sir Lancelot Oliphant	Deputy Under Secretary in the Foreign Office
Sir Eric Phipps	British Ambassador to France

Sir Orme Sargent	Assistant Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office
Sir William Seeds	British Ambassador to Soviet Union (From Jan, 1939)
William Strang	Head of Central Department, Foreign Office
Sir Robert Vansittart	Permanent Under Secretary, Foreign Office (1930-38) Chief Diplomatic Adviser to Foreign Office, (1938-41)
Gregory Vereker	Counsellor in the British Embassy (Moscow)
A. Walker	Junior Official in the Northern Department, Foreign Office
F. A. L. Warmin	Junior Official in the Northern Department, Foreign Office

'Anti - Appeasers'

Leopold Amery	Conservative M.P. for Sparbrook
Clement Attlee	Leader of the Labour Party and M.P. for Stepney
Robert Boothby	Conservative M.P. for East Aberdeenshire
Lord Robert Cecil	President of the British League of Nations Union and M.P. for South Dorset
Winston Churchill	Conservative M.P. for Epsom
Hugh Dalton	Labour M.P. for Bishop Auckland
Anthony Eden	Foreign Secretary, 1935 - 38. Conservative M.P. for Warwick and Leamington
David Lloyd George	Liberal M. P. for Caernarfon Boroughs

Arthur Greenwood	Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and M.P. for Wakefield
Harold Macmillan	Conservative M.P. for Stockport
Harold Nicolson	National Labour M.P. for West Leicester
Archibald Sinclair	Leader of the Liberals and M.P. for Caithness
General Edward Spears	National Liberal M.P. for Loughborough

Appendix II; Article in The Times. Dated, 15 February, 1938. FO 371 / 22288

' PREPAREDNESS IN RUSSIA - STALIN ON DANGERS FROM ABROAD - VICTORY NOT YET FINAL - Moscow, Feb 14, - An important statement by M. Stalin on the present position of the Soviet Union was published in the *Pravda* to-day. The statement was in reply to questions put to M. Stalin by M. Ivanoff, a young Communist League member and propagandist in a district of the Kursk region.

M. Stalin distinguished between two problems:-

(1) The problem of the internal relations of out country, that is the problem of over-coming our own bourgeoisie and building a complete socialism.

(2) The problem of the external relations of our country, that is the problem of fully securing our country from the dangers of armed intervention and restoration.

The first problem, said M. Stalin, had been solved, for the bourgeoisie had been liquidated and Socialism had been built in the main. We call this (he continued) the victory of Socialism, or, more accurately, the victory of Socialist construction in a single country. Trotsky, Zinovieff, Kameneff, and other such gentlemen, who subsequently became the spies and agents of Fascism, denied the possibility of building Socialism in our country without the previous victory of the Socialist revolution in other countries, in the capitalist countries. These gentlemen in fact wanted to turn our country back to the road of bourgeois development while covering their apostasy with false references to "the victory of the revolution" in other countries. Precisely this was the subject of dispute between our party and these gentlemen. The further course of the development

of our country showed that the party was right and Trotsky and company were wrong.

PROLETARIAN AID - Turning to the second problem, that of external relations, M. Stalin said: - But since we live not on an island but " in a system of States," a considerable part of which are hostile to the land of Socialism, creating danger, intervention, and restoration, we say frankly and honestly that a victory of Socialism in our country is not yet final. But from this it follows that the second problem has not yet been solved and it will still have to be solved.

It could be solved, said M. Stalin, only by joining the serious efforts of the international proletariat with the still more serious efforts of the whole Soviet people. International proletarian connexions of the working class in the U.S.S.R. with the working class in bourgeois countries should be strengthened and reinforced. Political assistance on the part of the working class of the bourgeois countries to the working class of our country, in the event of an armed attack, should be organized, just as there should be organized every assistance on the part of he working class of our country to the working class of the bourgeois countries. Our Red Army and Red Air Force should be strengthened and consolidated in every way. Our whole people should be kept in a state of mobilization and preparedness in the face of danger of an armed attack, so that no "accident" and no tricks of our external enemies could catch us unawares.'

Appendix III; Memorandum by Lascelles. Enclosed in Vereker to Collier. 14 June, 1938. FO 371 / 22288

' The superficial similarities between the fascist system of government, on the one hand, and the pseudo-communist Soviet system on the other, are so evident, so numerous and so well - known that it would serve no useful purpose to enumerate them in detail. Indeed it may fairly be said that the difficulty is to discover important points of practical dissimilarity. Despite wide constitutional divergencies, both systems involve in practice the rule of a dictator invested with almost unlimited powers; a Government subservient not only to the dictator himself, but also to the political party of which he is the head; the elimination of all other political parties, and a concomitant ruthless suppression of individual liberty in every field by such means as an all-pervading censorship and a secret police operating largely without law; the constant use of a vast and strident propaganda machine; indulgence in occasional crude travesties of popular suffrage in the form of rigged plebiscites, or "elections" in which there is no choice of candidates; the piling up of colossal armaments; encouragement of the militarist outlook and a more or less privileged social position for the armed forces; the more or less complete prostitution of literature and the arts to the political theories of the regime, and so on.

Contrasted with this manifold similarity of practical methods, there is of course a wide divergence of ostensible aims, and this divergence is regarded in some quarters as rendering the Soviet system at once less intrinsically detestable and less immediately dangerous to third parties. While, however, there can be little doubt that the Soviet system does constitute a less immediate danger, it is questionable whether this is really attributable to the existing differences of theory and dogma; and it is also questionable whether the intrinsic merits of the

Soviet system can fairly be assessed on the basis of its theoretical aims.

It may be possible to form an estimate of the present tendencies and dangers of fascism by a straightforward interpretation of the public utterances of Hitler and Mussolini and the writings of Treitschke and others, for fascism of all brands appears to be comparatively outspoken in its aims and consistent in its development. It is, however, of little use, and indeed positively dangerous, to take the holy writings of Bolshevism or the public utterances of M. Stalin as indicative of the real aims of the Kremlin. One might as well attempt to predict the Vatican's policy towards fascist Italy from the Sermon on the Mount. There is a yawning gulf between Soviet professions of faith (both past and present) and Soviet practice; and, what is more important, the gulf seems to be growing steadily wider. In 1938 Soviet practice was in almost all respects further from Soviet professed ideals than at any time since the October Revolution.

The greater honesty and frankness of fascism is indeed easily explained: its aggressive doctrine is not primarily intended to appeal to the outside and still independent world, whereas Soviet Communism is. Berlin, Rome and Tokyo aspire openly to expansion by force of arms: Moscow also aspires to expansion - the expansion of its system, and (less avowedly) of its own control over the system - but by a more subtle method, which necessitates the preliminary hoodwinking of large sections of foreign opinion. It cannot, therefore, afford the same degree of frankness, and in point of fact it carries hypocrisy to almost unbelievable lengths.

In these circumstances a comparison of fascist and communist theory would be purely academic, and in practice most misleading. To say, for instance, that Soviet Communism, unlike Fascism, "regards politics as the art of human happiness", may be perfectly sound as an interpretation of official Bolshevik

dogma, but is of no value whatsoever as a guide to Soviet methods and policy, external or internal, at the present time or in the immediate and foreseeable future. If fascism avowedly aims at "maximising the material power or the nation", it must be allowed that the Soviet Government themselves have achieved a very considerable measure of success along these lines, and that this success has been achieved at a stupendous cost in terms of human happiness.

The argument that the three principal fascist countries have, unlike the Soviet Union, already "maximised their material power" by means of foreign conquest, is only superficially true: from a relatively insignificant Russian nucleus the Soviet political system expanded more by force of arms than by genuine conversion, engulfing peoples, who had little or no wish for it and whose misfortune it was to lack even the protection of the Peace Treaties, since they had previously - and equally unwillingly - been incorporated in the old Russian Empire. The system has since then expanded, for all practical purposes, far beyond the southern confines of that Empire, Soviet influence being paramount in Outer Mongolia and steadily increasing in Sinkiang - two areas which comprise between them roughly a third of China. For that matter, the Soviet Government for many years did their utmost to secure control over China proper, and only ceased to supply their protégés with arms, money and advisers when it became obvious that a stale - mate had been reached. It is not any distaste for foreign expansion, but mere political expediency, which has so far prevented these and other territories from final absorption in the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, in the internal sphere "the art of human happiness" is cultivated by the Soviet Government after a fashion which differs only from fascist practice by an even greater ruthlessness.

In the name of an intensely bigoted political creed a merciless war is waged on all forms of religion, though there can be no doubt that after twenty years of

persecution the bulk of the Soviet population is still deeply religious at heart. It may be that in this matter the Soviet authorities genuinely believe themselves to be acting for the best. So did Torquemada, who is not generally regarded as a pioneer of human progress.

A similar ruthless cruelty is the hall-mark of the Soviet system in other spheres. The methods employed to enforce collectivisation on the land resulted in death by starvation for several million Soviet citizens. Innumerable public works, such as the White Sea Canal, have been and are being carried out in the Soviet Union with political convict labour working under conditions which only the most prejudiced apologist of Bolshevism could call tolerably humane. Possibly these works may be ultimately designed to increase human happiness, but their immediate object is all too evidently to "maximise the material power of the State." To argue that this process is merely a defensive reaction to the fascist menace from without, is to ignore the chronological sequence, and also, of course, to beg the major question (touched upon elsewhere in this memorandum) of the Soviet Government's own ultimate aims. The argument could not, in any case, serve to excuse the senseless brutality of the methods employed. If Nazi Germany still believes in "the classic German doctrine of the State as power", it can scarcely be denied that the Kremlin has hitherto shown in practice a whole-hearted devotion to the same creed. Already the power of the State over the individual is unquestionably more absolute in the Soviet Union than in any of the fascist countries, and it is steadily growing. Parliamentary criticism of the sort still permitted in Japan would be quite unthinkable in the Soviet Union: the independence of thought and action displayed by the German clergy would be equally unthinkable in any section of the Soviet population (and not merely among the priesthood, towards whom the Soviet authorities are of course hostile in principle). Little as the ordinary

German or Italian citizen may have to boast of in the way of personal liberty, the Soviet citizen has infinitely less, and the measures taken to keep him in a state of blind subjection are of a thoroughness unrivalled elsewhere. In Germany and Italy to-day, for example, anyone can still buy foreign newspapers, though not all of them all the time: in the Soviet Union it is many years since any foreign newspaper was on sale to the public - the Soviet Government cannot afford to allow the Soviet citizen even this inadequate means of comparing his lot with that of ordinary people in other countries. Again, the discontented but not openly rebellious inhabitant of a fascist country can usually contrive without much difficulty to leave it, though he may not be allowed to take with him anything much besides the coat on his back. The ordinary Soviet citizen, on the other hand, has not the least possibility of leaving the Soviet paradise, whether he go naked or clothed, and those few who are sent abroad on Government service, or as exponents of Soviet cultural propaganda, are invariably obliged to leave their children or other near relatives behind them in pawn.

By some of those who admit that the freedom of the individual is greater in Germany than in the Soviet Union it is nevertheless urged in extenuation of the latter than one should take the recent history of the two countries into account. The German citizen, they say, is infinitely less free not than he was thirty years ago, the Soviet citizen freer though far from free. The first of these two statements is obviously true; the second is false, and would be obviously false were it not for the success of the Soviet Government during the last twenty years in distorting the history of Tsarist Russia for their own ends. The Russia of thirty years ago compared of course very unfavourably with the Germany of that date in point of political liberality, but the Russian subject nevertheless enjoyed a far greater freedom than his Soviet descendant of the present day. Russian socialists (whose political opinions, incidentally, were expressed whenever possible with bombs) were, it is true, persecuted relentlessly by the

Tsarist police, but many political parties, including groups of more or less advanced liberals, were permitted to pursue their diverse aims in public and without molestation. Moreover the Okhrana, besides being a great deal more tolerant than the Ogpu, was also far less efficient and all-pervading. The same degree of interference in the private life of the ordinary citizen would indeed have been quite impossible to achieve under the old economic dispensation even if it had been desired by the authorities, and is equally impossible to achieve in the economic conditions obtaining now in fascist countries: without collectivisation and housing arrangements once inadequate and communal, the Ogpu would be shorn of half its "antennae". The greater liberality of the old Russian régime in the political sphere was matched by greater tolerance in matters of culture notwithstanding the rigours of the Tsarist censorship: if innovators were frowned upon and sometimes persecuted, at least they managed to exist to a large extent without the compulsory hospitality of the State and to maintain themselves in the public eye. Anyone who doubts this should read the works of poets like Nekrasov, as published and widely read in Russia long before the October Revolution, and should then try to imagine the fate of a Soviet poet who showed one tenth of their independence of thought. All this is obvious enough, and would be scarcely worth mentioning were it not for the fact that many apologists of the Soviet régime, in their desire to find excuse for its barbarities, have accepted without question the Soviet picture of pre-war Russia. Nothing could be more unjust. Even the ugliest side of the Tsarist régime - the Siberian penal system - was merciful compared to its modern Soviet equivalent. Political convicts, male and female, were not then obliged, as they now are, to work on the construction of railway lines through the bitter months of the Siberian winter, handling steel rails at a temperature of - 45 centigrade; indeed the lot of the political convict under the old dispensation was in most parts of Siberia by no means intolerable, whereas now it is even worse

than that of the common criminal.

But to return to the comparison between fascist and bolshevik tyranny: it is impossible to state positively whether the political subjugation of the individual, beside being more absolute in the Soviet Union than in fascist countries, is also more keenly resented; but at least it is relevant to remark that there has been nothing in the fascist countries that can in any way compare with the political purge of the Soviet Union during the last two years. That purge, which cost the lives of many tens of thousands of Soviet citizens and brought misery upon many millions, was either a manifestation of sheer sadism on a colossal scale, or an indication of very widespread discontent amongst all sections of the Soviet population.

It is surely these positive facts, rather than the theoretical views of the Soviet leaders on the subject of the millennium, which should serve as a basis for the comparison of the intrinsic objection-ableness of the two systems. After all, the Soviet Union has had twenty long years (fifteen from the end of foreign intervention) to achieve its ostensible aims; and if material prosperity (which is of course a fascist ambition also) is on the increase in the Soviet Union, that corner stone of all true democracy, the liberty of the individual, has not only not increased, but is most markedly on the wane - a fact which the recent Soviet "elections", so called, only served to emphasise. This total suppression of the liberty of the individual may possibly be compatible with a genuine desire to achieve the goal of human happiness, but if so the point of view revealed is so perverse as to render the method, if not the desire itself, entirely unworthy of respect.

The Soviet Government's claim that their country is "the only true democracy in the world", or indeed that it is a democracy at all, is thus a piece of most arrant

and arrogant nonsense. Somewhat less nonsensical is the argument often advanced by foreign sympathisers, that the Soviet Union, however undemocratic politically, is at least a champion of economic equalitarianism. Yet here again Soviet practice is steadily drifting away from Soviet theory. The Soviet Union's proudest boast is that it has abolished the private exploitation of labour. That is a true boast; but it is probable that the average Russian workman, if he could be made aware of the position of the workers in the capitalist world of Western Europe and the U.S.A., would envy them most heartily. He is grossly exploited, not by individual employers between whom he can choose and against whom he can strike, but by the State itself, against whom he can strike, but by the State itself, against which he is absolutely powerless. And the State consists in practice of a horde of Government and Party officials who, without being able to rival in actual wealth the old moneyed class, exist in conditions of luxury which are in glaring contrast to his terrible poverty. For in the Soviet Union political "pull" ensures almost all those things which money buys elsewhere. If the Soviet Party boss, enjoying a comfortable country house, a car, several servants and special facilities for obtaining food supplies, is still rather less well off than the big industrial magnates in the fascist countries, the ordinary Soviet worker is far less well off, in respect of food, housing and most other essentials, than the ordinary workers in those same fascist countries. The privileged existence of the one, and the sordid indigence of the other, are plain for all to see who live in Moscow. Moreover these economic class distinctions, so far from being in process of disappearance, are fast crystallising - inevitably so, since even quite minor representatives of the bureaucracy now draw salaries upwards of twenty times as large as the average wage of the manual worker (or over forty times the lowest wage), since wealth can be inherited (free of all death duties, at that!), since the official rate of interest on the State loans is four per cent, and since "influence" is of paramount importance in almost all walks of life. It will be time to talk of Soviet

economic equalitarianism when the sons and daughters of prominent Party and Government officials are found working in the factories at the average wage for unskilled labour, or as peasants on the collective farms; when the percentage of Party and Government officials in the luxurious Black Sea sanatoria falls below fifty; and when the children of the "big men" in the Kremlin are educated in the ordinary schools. And let it not be urged that "these things take time", that the Soviet system has had too short a while to justify itself; for in all these things the retrograde tendency is unmistakable, and Russia under Stalin is markedly less liberal than was Russia under Lenin. Meanwhile many foreign observers of the Nazi and Italian fascist systems, including some of the bitterest critics, admit that these systems are making a genuine effort, if not to break down the existing occupational barriers (which indeed they encourage), at least to reduce the purely snobbish barriers, based on wealth and birth, that formerly separated one class from another.

In only one essential respect can Soviet economic equalitarianism be said to be a reality: there is nothing in theory to prevent a Soviet citizen from living in lifelong idleness on inherited wealth, but to do so would still, in all probability, involve unpleasant consequences. Every citizen must at least go through the motions of pulling his weight, though the pretence is in some cases very transparent. In this respect the Soviet system undoubtedly compares favourably with the fascist order - and equally, of course, with our own.

On the Social side also there a few credit items to set against the formidable list of debits, but the theoretical advantage is always whittled down in practice. To one extolling the famous Soviet "right to work" the late Lord Snowden observed that to the best of his knowledge there was no unemployment on Dartmoor. The retort contains a core of solid truth. The Soviet citizen who enjoys this right

(and in point of fact not all Soviet citizens enjoy it all the time) does so subject to the proviso that he shall work when, where and for whatever wage the Government may decide, otherwise he is liable to find himself without employment and with nothing between himself and actual starvation. Soviet racial policy, again, is by no means as liberal and disinterested as it professes to be: a short extract from a recent Chancery letter is annexed hereto by way amplification of this statement. The Soviet attitude in regard to the equality of the sexes contrasts very favourably with that of the fascist Powers, but the recent legislation for the encouragement of large families is a distinctly retrograde step towards the fascist conception of woman as a factory for the production of the State's requirements in human material. The foregoing are not the only "credit items" on the social side, but they are probably the most important, and it will be seen that in practice they are all subject to a very considerable discount.

Comparison of the dangers which the two systems constitute to third parties, and in particular to the British commonwealth, is of course a separate question; but here also it is well to confront Soviet theory with Soviet practice...and to be guided chiefly by the latter: all the more so since even the Soviet theoreticians do not speak with one voice. Official Soviet spokesmen, particularly in recent times, have repeatedly asserted that "the Soviet Union does not covet a single inch of foreign soil." Yet the vows of these same spokesmen to the cause of World Revolution are periodically renewed , and there can be no doubt whatsoever that in their view World Revolution means the ultimate rule of Moscow, exercised with as much ruthless thoroughness as it is even now exercised over the Allied Republics constituting the Soviet Union. For all practical purposes, therefore, the ideal of World Revolution on the Soviet model is an aggressive and nationalist ideal. There can be no question that the Soviet

authorities, no less than the fascist Powers, would in actual fact welcome the collapse of the British Empire at a moment of their own choosing. As suggested above, it is not that there are at heart any less imperialist or "expansionist" than the fascists: the Soviet Union is already a vast empire comprised of many peoples having for the most part no common ties of blood or faith, in which the hollow pretence of voluntary confederation fails altogether to conceal the despotic centralised rule of the Kremlin; and it is caution, not any disinclination of principle, that prevents the Soviet authorities from attempting to extent their dominion still further southward, from its present limit on the Pamirs, to Cape Comorin. The attempt would indeed probably take the outward form of "assistance to the toiling Indian masses in their struggle for national liberation", but in its essence it would be none the less an imperialist adventure for all that, and would be very similar in its practical results to a more straightforward act of aggression on fascist lines. Once incorporated in the "free brotherhood of Soviet people", the Allied Soviet Socialist Republics of Northern India and the Decan would have it no more chance of seceding than Abyssinia has of detaching herself from the Italian Empire, and would enjoy no greater degree of real autonomy in regard to fundamental economic and social questions, despite all superficial and constitutional appearances to the contrary. The façade would of course be markedly different, but the framework behind it would not.

Meanwhile, however, caution and the avoidance of war are essential to the very existence of the Soviet Union. Whatever the fascist States may think of their ability to step at once into our imperial shoes - and it is at least questionable whether the Germans for their part have any illusions on that score - the Russians certainly do not feel able, at the present juncture, to turn a British collapse to their account. The Soviet Government, whatever their ideals may be, have as yet achieved so small a sum of real human happiness for their own people that they are unable to count on internal solidarity in any foreign

venture. Moreover they lack what is at once the principal incentive and the excuse of the fascist Powers - an urgent population problem. They have plenty of room and abundant store of raw materials. Obviously, therefore, they can well afford to wait; and until they are ready, any change in the existing order of the capitalist world is unwelcome to them, for such a change could scarcely fail to benefit the fascist States whom alone they really fear. The Soviet danger to third parties, and especially to the British Commonwealth, is in consequence remote compared with the fascist danger; and it may be desirable and possible to cooperate with the Soviet Union against the Fascists for a while. Such temporary cooperation, however would not result in lessening the danger ultimately to be feared from the Soviet Union, and might well have the effect of increasing it by strengthening the external position of the Soviet Government. The conversion of Bolshevism to methods of <u>permanent</u> cooperation with the Western democracies is not for a moment to be hoped for. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that if at the moment the Soviet Government fear the fascist Powers alone, it is the Western democracies whom they really hate. Though fascism so closely resembles their own system in practice, they nevertheless regard it as a disease which, while it may in the immediate future have the most serious consequences for the world in general, cannot indefinitely stem the tide of human progress. The Western democracies, on the other hand, with their slow but steady advance towards a socialist order by means of evolution rather than revolution, are rightly regarded by the Kremlin as rivals far from formidable than the fascist Powers in the long run. Herr Hitler may be the immediate enemy, but Sir Walter Citrine and the moderate, constitutionally - minded socialists are recognised as the ultimate menace to the ideal of a Bolshevik world-order. As a necessary consequence of M. Litvinov's avowedly opportunist policy of cooperation "at the present juncture", the ultimate aspirations of the Soviet Government towards World Revolution have been soft-

pedalled of late, but there is absolutely no reason to believe that these aspirations have been, or are likely to be, abandoned. Even if we assume - and it would be most rash to do so - that the present rulers of Russia have lost all traces of revolutionary idealism, it is quite certain that many of those whom they rule have not. Meanwhile the "capitalist-encirclement" is an ever - present nightmare to those same rulers, whatever their private ideals may be. The two political systems are fundamentally hostile to one another, and the Soviet Government undoubtedly believe that there can be no permanent security either for Bolshevism or for themselves so long as the capitalist world exists. Moreover if there has been any cooling - off of revolutionary ardour amongst the Soviet leaders, there has been no indication of a corresponding increase in devotion to purely pacifist ideals. On the contrary, there have been many signs of a revival of the old militarist and imperialist mentality which made of pre-war Russia a standing menace to the British Empire in Asia. It is sometimes assumed that if we are to be faced once more with a Russia dominated by militarist and Pan-Russian sentiment, we shall at least be rid of the Comintern danger by way of compensation. But this is to misunderstand altogether the aims of the Third International and to ignore its subservience to the Soviet Union as a nationalist State. There is nothing incompatible between the militarist and Pan-Russian mentality and the ideal of World Revolution as understood by the Kremlin.

It remains to consider which of the two systems is likely to prove more dangerous in the long run. As already pointed out, time is on the side of Bolshevism, and this fact, which lessens the immediate danger of Bolshevism as compared with Fascism, surely makes the ultimate menace of the former by far the greater. Given the barest minimum of political and economic good sense - and so far, admittedly, there has been little of the one and not too much of the other - the Soviet Union, with its almost limitless resources in men, materials

and space, has every possibility of increasing its already formidable power tenfold in the course of the next few years without indulging in any foreign venture. But as its strength increases, so without doubt will its truculence in the sphere of foreign affairs. For, as already stated, it is impelled towards expansion both by its political creed and by its realisation of the fundamental hostility of the capitalist encirclement. If there is no physical reason (such as the pressure of a growing population) why it should not remain indefinitely within its present ample boundaries, there are unfortunately several cogent psychological reasons why it should not be content to do so.

The fascist States, on the other hand, have time against them - hence of course the greater imminence of the fascist menace. If, however, they can be restrained by a show of firmness from launching a general attack on their neighbours during the next few years, there seems no fundamental reason why the danger which they at present constitute should not evaporate altogether. For their relationship to their neighbours is essentially different from the relationship of the Soviet Union to the rest of the world. True, they have shown every disposition to take what they can get wherever they can get it; but in this they are not so very different from their neighbours. The difference, such as it is, lies in the greater effrontery of their methods, their greater determination to do at all costs what almost all countries have as some time done and what most of them would do again if sufficiently tempted. If, in fact, their general psychological attitude does little credit to the present-day capitalist world, it is not fundamentally an abnormal one. Unlike the Soviet Union, they have no proselytizing mission behind their urge to expand nor is there any irreconcilable cleavage between their social system and that of the rest of the capitalist world. Faced with a combination of main force (which is the essence of their own creed) and reasonableness as regards their legitimate demands, e.g. in the matter of raw materials, they may yet be induced to adopt an attitude of

comparative good - neighbourliness and cooperation. The hope may at the moment seem slender enough in all conscience, but there is nothing impossible about it.

With the Soviet Union it is quite otherwise. That country is sundered from all others by an unbridgeable gulf of dogma. If the fascist States may be likened to intolerably bumptious but essentially ordinary schoolboys, in whose ultimate conversion to respectability it is difficult for the already respectable to believe, the Soviet Union resembles rather a young giant of some alien, hostile and hated race. He does not throw his weight about much at present, for he is a rather sickly creature, but he is growing fast, and knows in his heart that he can never shake down with the rest.

The foregoing paragraphs deal with the ultimate dangers of the two systems to third parties, i.e. the dangers of actual aggression, whether straightforward or masked. It remains to consider which of the two systems is in the meantime the more dangerous in the matter of propaganda.

The fascist creed, as has been said above, is not primarily intended to appeal to the outside world. It is undisguisedly nationalist, and those who profess it make no secret of their ambition to rule such other nations as they can subdue by force of arms; it is founded largely on a collection of ethnological errors so crude as almost to rival the tenets of British Israel; and it is bitterly hostile to a race which is scattered throughout all countries and exceedingly influential in most. It is, therefore, fundamentally repellent to both the patriotism and the common sense of the vast bulk of the population in other countries. Such success as it has achieved abroad is due to a purely negative factor - to its clever exploitation of the general fear of Bolshevism amongst the more conservative, who regard Fascism as the lesser evil, and would, however little they admire it, prefer it to

Bolshevism in their own country and (more especially) in countries other than their own.

Specifically Soviet communist propaganda has also made but little progress so far, at any rate in the British Empire. This is not only due to the deplorable object-lesson provided by the conditions actually obtaining in the Soviet Union, but also to the fact that Soviet propaganda, though conducted on a colossal scale and with no lack of material resources, is on the whole remarkably clumsy. Nevertheless its appeal is necessarily far wider and more insidious than that of the fascist doctrines, and of Nazism in particular. Its nationalist tendencies are carefully masked beneath the pretence of internationalism, of free federation as opposed to Muscovite hegemony, and consequently it is not, if taken at its face value, obviously incompatible with a kind of national patriotism - witness the attitude of the French communists. Moreover, however discouraging the picture presented by Soviet Russia itself, Marxian communism, which is still the official creed of the Soviet Union, shines forth in contrast to the Nazi doctrines as a sober and intellectually respectable philosophic system, and is associated in the minds of countless people abroad with the idea of democracy and social progress - for which, indeed, the Soviet Union stands in theory, though not in practice. The suggestion has often been made, not altogether without plausibility, that Marxism cannot be condemned merely because a people as notoriously inept as the Russians have made a mess of it; and from this it is but a small (though very dangerous) step to the belief that the Marxian experiment could be tried in other countries without involving the tutelage of Moscow.

For all these reasons there is, as it were, a permanent clientèle for more or less specifically Bolshevik doctrines in all foreign countries, both amongst intellectuals and amongst those who, without the ability to think things out for

themselves, have little cause to be satisfied with the capitalist system. This clientèle varies in inverse proportion to the index of economic prosperity. Not all the "clients" condone the actions of the Soviet Government, but their ideals are of a kind which that Government knows only too well how to exploit.

To sum up, then, it may be said:

(a) that in practice, though not in theory, Bolshevism is at least as intrinsically worthy of detestation as fascism;

(b) that for a number of practical reasons unconnected with its theoretical aims, Bolshevism constitutes the less immediate menace of the two;

(c) that Bolshevism, which is in practice, though not avowedly, as aggressively nationalist as fascism, is the more dangerous and irreconcilable enemy in the long run; and that

(d) Bolshevik propaganda is, and must always remain, a far more serious problem than its fascist counterpart.'